

(i am willing to) burn (for you) by jjjuicy

Series: [burn \[1\]](#)

Category: IT (Movies - Muschietti), IT - Stephen King, Stranger Things (TV 2016)

Genre: Dialogue Heavy, Eddie Kaspbrak & Eleven | Jane Hopper Are Twins, Eddie Kaspbrak Has Powers, F/M, M/M

Language: English

Characters: Ben Hanscom, Beverly Marsh, Bill Denbrough, Dustin Henderson, Eddie Kaspbrak, Eleven | Jane Hopper, Jim "Chief" Hopper, Jonathan Byers, Joyce Byers, Lucas Sinclair, Maxine "Max" Mayfield, Mike Hanlon, Mike Wheeler, Nancy Wheeler, Richie Tozier, Robin Buckley, Stanley Uris, Steve Harrington, Will Byers

Relationships: Beverly Marsh & Maxine "Max" Mayfield, Dustin Henderson & Eddie Kaspbrak, Eddie Kaspbrak & Maxine "Max" Mayfield, Eddie Kaspbrak/Richie Tozier, Eleven | Jane Hopper & Eddie Kaspbrak, Eleven | Jane Hopper & Richie Tozier, Eleven | Jane Hopper/Mike Wheeler, Lucas Sinclair & Eddie Kaspbrak, Maxine "Max" Mayfield/Lucas Sinclair, Mike Wheeler & Eddie Kaspbrak, Robin Buckley & Eddie Kaspbrak, Steve Harrington & Eddie Kaspbrak, Will Byers & Eddie Kaspbrak

Status: Completed

Published: 2019-11-10

Updated: 2019-12-09

Packaged: 2019-12-16 17:06:28

Rating: Not Rated

Warnings: Creator Chose Not To Use Archive Warnings, Graphic Depictions Of Violence

Chapters: 31

Words: 36,346

Publisher: archiveofourown.org

Summary:

Seven months after Eddie Kaspbrak kills a clown and stops taking his meds, his mother dies of a heart attack.

He thinks it can't get worse, but it does- turns out, Sonia wasn't his mother, Frank wasn't his father, his birth certificate is a fake, and he's going to live with a twin sister he just found out existed and her adopted dad.

In short: his life is a lie.

And he doesn't even know that he has superpowers yet.

1. 1

Author's Note:

hello, new reader! i hope you enjoy <3

It had been the seven month anniversary of July 4th when Jim Hopper received the phone call from Dr. Owens, and he had immediately thought that somehow, again, the gate was opened. He picked up the phone and pressed it to his ear, rudely asking Owens what he needed while staring at El's door, the door open three inches because she was reading comics with Dustin. He knew she would never cheat on Mike, but at this point, the door being opened was habit. Joyce had given the speech he wrote to El after finding it in his shirt pocket while he in the hospital, knocked unconscious and with some burns and cuts, but all around alive. He was not prepared for what came out of Owens' mouth, rushed and frantic.

"Jane isn't Terry Ives' only child." He says quickly. He is panting, as if he just learned the news and had ran to a phone to call Jim.

"What?" Jim asks, his brows pinching together.

"There's a Twelve! She had twins, but one of them was broken out of Brenner's lab by a doctor when they were two-"

"Slow down!"

"We would have never known, but the kid's only parent just had a heart attack and died, Jim- they found his birth certificate was a fake when searching for family, but they were able to trace it to the fake case of a kidnapped kid Brenner made up to find him-"

"Owens, what are you saying?"

The fast words come to a halt. "That kid has no family left, except for Terry and Becky Ives. And Jane. He's her brother."

"Is he... like her?"

"I'm traveling to Maine with a team as we speak to meet him and find out for sure. According to Brenner's research, he did. But I don't think he knows. He's told the names of all his medication and nobody knows what one of them is, can't find out anywhere. We think it's a suppressant, or something, since we've never heard about him before." The man explains as Hopper processes the information. He rubs his beard, unsure what to think. "Hop, if this kid is like Jane, we don't know what to do. The Ives sisters don't want him. I know you have your hands full already- but I just thought you should know. You can decide whether or not to tell Jane. That's all."

"That's all, huh?" Hopper mocks. "Yeah, I'll think about it. Bye, Owens." He says, not waiting for a 'bye' back before hanging up.

As soon as he hangs up, the door to El's room opens, and Hopper sighs. He's not surprised that she was listening in- she tends to snoop, and she's good at it, too. "Dr. Owens? Why... were you talking to him? Everything is okay?" She asks, Dustin appearing behind her with a worried expression.

"Everything's fine, El. Uh," He pauses, looking over to her. She had told him about Kali, about what it was like to find her sister. He couldn't keep this from her- it occurs to him he never asked the kids name. Well, he'd find out soon enough. "Dustin, why don't you head home? I gotta talk to El."

Dustin and El exchange a glance before Dustin clears his throat. "Yes, sir." Then he addresses El. "Make sure you give back the Harley Quinn one, okay? Suzie got it for me."

El smiles. "Yes. Suzie." She says.

Dustin beams, disappears into her room for a moment, then exits holding a few comic books, supposedly leaving behind one about a harlequin, whatever that was. Hopper doesn't understand children's comics and he doesn't try to, either. Dustin bids them both goodbye before leaving.

El's focus turns to Hopper. "Everything is okay?" She asks again.

Hopper sighs. "Sit down, kid."

"Everything is not okay." El deduces as she listens to Hopper.

"Nobody's hurt." Jim reassures her, though he knows the kids parent died. Was it his mom or dad? Did Owens say? He places his hands on his hips and nods, wondering how to tell El. "I'm just going to say it, I guess." He says before taking a breath. "El, you have a brother."

A second goes by, and El's face lights up. "You and Joyce got married?" She asks, a smile breaking out onto her face. Hopper laughs a little bit, but tells her no. This confuses the girl. "Well, I have a sister, too. So I probably have more siblings, but- where are you going with this?" She asks, confusion evident.

"No," Hopper breaths out. He slides his hands down his face. "No, as in a biological brother. A twin. Terry had twins, apparently."

"That-" El frowns. "No, no, I don't. There was just me. Jane. Terry would have known."

"I-" Hopper pauses, but she makes a point. "I don't know the logistics of it all, but I think her doctors didn't want her to know. It's probably harder to get away with stealing two kids then one."

El frowns. "Logistics?"

"Exact details."

The girl nods, pressing her lips together. "Is he like me?"

"I... don't know yet. I just know he's out there."

"Can I... meet him? What's going to happen to him?"

A good question that Jim has no idea to answer to, but looking at his daughters face, he produces one. "He can stay with us, for a bit. Until we find somewhere for him."

And that's exactly what he tells Dr. Owens, too.

2. 2

Eddie was sitting in the police station, waiting outside a closed and locked door, Richie in the chair next to him.

Yesterday, his mom died.

His mom died and he has no other family. The meds he took apparently don't exist according to Greta Keene and all of Ben's research. Richie kissed him and they still haven't talked about it.

What even is his life? The only thing he thinks is keeping him from falling off the face of the Earth is Richie's hand gripped in his, reassuring him, telling him that no matter what, he'll always have him. It's calming, but not nearly enough to subdue the panic in his chest. He'd reach for his aspirator, but he doesn't have it with him because he'd been intent on leaving it at home. He regrets that. It was stupid, and now he might choke and die on his own lungs.

"Go on in, Kaspbrak." A cop says. Eddie doesn't know when, but the door in front of them had opened; Richie's hand fell out of his grip quickly, and the cop was approaching them. Eddie nods quickly and enters the room the cop just left without saying anything, only giving Richie an apologetic glance before leaving him outside.

He enters the room, which is entirely empty except for a table with four chairs, one occupied by an old man in a lab coat, and a can of Coca-Cola.

"Hello, Edward." The man says. "Or, is it, Eddie?"

"Eddie is fine." Eddie answers, standing awkwardly. He pulls at the fingers of the hand that used to be incased in a cast- a nervous habit he's picked up since It- and the man invites him to sit. Eddie complies.

"My name is Dr. Sam Owens." He informs.

"Were you my mom's doctor?"

"Ah, no." He laughs, but Eddie can tell he's missing something that

would make the question funny at all. Who the fuck laughs at an orphan? "I'm more of a *scientist* than a doctor. I'm here to talk to *you*, Eddie."

"Oh."

"What I'm about to discuss with you... It's heavy. It's life-changing." He explains. Eddie gulps. "But I think you're strong, Eddie. I know you can get through this. And you have people to help, no? Your friend out there? Others, I'm sure?"

Eddie nods, his throat and mouth dry. What was this scientist going to tell him that can be deemed worse news than his mother being dead?

"Do you know who Frank Kaspbrak is?"

Eddie nods, unsure what this has to do with his father, but decides to go along with it. He's too tired to argue. "My father. He died when I was six. He was a doctor." He answers. Then he adds, "A real doctor, not a scientist."

The man's expression turns into a grim shock. "She really didn't tell you anything?"

She? Like, his mom? Eddie shifts uncomfortably- he wouldn't be surprised if his mother was keeping secrets, but what could be so horrible that she had scientists involved? "What do you mean?"

The man lets out a sigh, and Eddie's head is swimming. What doesn't he know? "Frank Kaspbrak was a scientist. But Eddie, the man was murdered when you were two. And... he wasn't your father."

"What?" Eddie's eyes widen, and he considers getting up to leave, but he can't feel his legs. Because really, he's always wondered. Wondered why he had no memories of his father when he was six when he died- not a long time with him, but long enough that he should have memories. Good memories. He always remembers crying, and Frank coming in to comfort him.

He's shocked at how quickly 'dad' turned to 'Frank'. Maybe, on some instinctual level, he always knew Frank wasn't his dad. He looked at

pictures of him and forced himself to see a resemblance- we both have brown eyes, see?- but had there really been?

"I understand if this is too much at once- we can take a break, if you want."

"No! No, what are you saying?" He urges the man to continue.

Dr. Owens folds his hands together. "Eddie, Sonia Kaspbrak is *not* your biological parent. Your mother is named Terry Ives. This became apparent when the police searched for any distant family and found nothing- because Edward Kaspbrak does not exist. But Edward Ives does. You were kidnapped when you were two."

Eddie stares at the man in shock. The world is swimming- the man takes a sip from his bottle of Coca-Cola, emptying it. Eddie might throw up. He can't believe-

"Eddie? Do you need a break?"

"A break?" Eddie forces out. He feels his chin wobble. A break would suggest that they're in the middle of something, not at the end. "There's more?"

"We can-"

"Just tell me!" He snaps. He already feels like he's going to hurl, and he wants whatever this is to be over. The dream needs to end. The nightmare needs to be over. Warm and safe, he'll wake up in his bed and the past seven months hadn't happened. His mom is alive and his medication *makes sense* and Richie didn't kiss him and ignore it. That's all he wants. Normalcy.

The man pauses. "Very well." He says calmly, and Eddie knows that all normalcy is gone from the way he sets his jaw. This is when Eddie wonders why a scientist is talking to him and not a social worker. He knows he has no other family alive, so he's most likely going to foster care. That's what he assumed this meeting was about: breaking bad news that he already known. Except he hadn't known this- any of this. His whole life had been a lie and his tongue feels too big for his mouth, like he might choke. He couldn't tell the scientist he wanted a

break if he tried. "Your biological mother and aunt can't take care of you. But, your sister was adopted by a man- a very respectable almost friend of mine- named Jim Hopper. He's offered to take you in, for now. To make sure you're safe before we find you a more... permanent residence."

"My sister?" Eddie breaths out, the words sounding clunky on his tongue; he's never had to say them before, because he's an only child. Was an only child. But was really never an only child, because the woman he grown up listening to and submitting to on the premise of her keeping him safe had really been his kidnapper. Holding him hostage.

He's been held hostage his entire life, and he had knew it, too. But... not like this.

"She's your twin, actually. Jane, but you'll find her friends call her Eleven."

"Why?" Eddie asks because he can't produce much else.

Dr. Owens only laughs, giving Eddie a dismissive gesture with his hands. "We'll talk more soon. Pack up, alright? A few others and I will be taking you to your new home in two days."

Eddie's eyes widen- two days? That's not nearly enough time to say goodbye to the Losers. A lifetime wouldn't be long enough. "How far?" He asks as the man stands up, beginning his walk to the door.

"Indiana. About sixteen hours."

Eddie deflates. He'll be sixteen hours from Richie. From Bill. Stan. Everyone.

"I'll send your friend in." The man sighs. "You are... *stronger* than you think you are, Edward."

Then he leaves.

Notes for the Chapter:

i totally forgot mr. bowers was dead when i posted this, but i fixed it so he's not in there anymore. WHOOPS.

3. 3

Richie walked inside shyly, then shut the door and hurried to Eddie's side. He felt Richie's hand swipe across his cheek and realized he was wiping away a tear, but he hadn't realized he was crying until right then.

"Eds, what happened?" Richie asks, obviously concerned with him. Eddie doesn't respond, trying to quiet himself, to stay strong, but he's not strong. He's not strong at all, no matter what Dr. Owens says. He's delicate. He can't handle this. Richie's hand freezes on his cheek and pulls off, leaving them both separated. "Geez," Richie said awkwardly, walking around to the other side of the table. "That asshole left you in here crying and didn't have the decency to throw out the trash? What a dick." He points out, bending down and picking up the empty Cola can from the table. It was on the floor, but Eddie doesn't remember the man dropping it or it rolling off. Richie pops the tab of the top, slips it into his pocket, then sets the trash down on the table. He returns to Eddie's side, sitting in the chair next to him; in a moment, his entire demeanor changes. "Eds, what did he say?"

"Jane Hopper." Eddie replies weakly, crossing his arms over his chest.

"Who is that? Great aunt, three times removed?" He asks, pushing his glasses up his nose. Eddie shakes his head. "Four? Five?"

"A twin sister." Eddie breaths out. The words still feel weird and foreign.

Richie laughs. Eddie does not. The smile falls from his lips. "What?"

"A twin sister. Her name is Jane Hopper. She was adopted by some guy named Jim. We were separated when we were two because Frank and Sonia kidnapped me, and my entire life is a lie."

Richie doesn't respond. "You're fucking with me, right? Eds, you're fucking with me?"

"I leave for Indiana in two days. Jim offered to help me out." He continues, picking at the skin on the back of his hand and not making eye contact with Richie. He doesn't want to see the look on Richie's face as he realizes that he and Eddie will be separated by sixteen hours of distance.

Richie says quietly, "This isn't fucking funny, Eds."

"I'm not laughing." Eddie replies, his voice shaky. "I think I'm going to pass out."

"O-okay." Richie says softly, extending a hand to helping Eddie up. "My mom is making lasagna tonight, but maybe we can order pizza and call the Losers over for a sleepover?"

Eddie nods his head and takes Richie's hand.

"But friends don't lie!" El complains to Hopper, stepping closer to

him.

He had told her that no one can know about her twin yet. Not even Mike. This had resulted in her getting angry, but Hopper insisted it was for everyone's safety- they didn't know the extent of what he can do or if he can even control himself. They didn't know if he was some sort of criminal chain smoker who murders people, like how Hopper thought Kali was, which was only two-thirds true.

El reminded him that she, technically, is also a criminal and a murderer, which made him only angrier.

But he didn't change his position. Nobody will know about Twelve until they know if he's safe to be around. And when he argued it like that- insisting that they needed to keep Mike and the others safe- Eleven started to falter.

Friends don't lie was her last defense.

"You're not lying! Simply... withholding the truth for a short period of time."

Eleven huffs and storms off to her room, but Hopper knows he won that round.

It's not often every Loser is free and all can manage to make it to a

sleepover, but this is one of those times.

Richie had called everyone, explaining that Eddie needs to talk to them. Everybody was easily able to make it, cancelling plans or making up excuses to their parents and guardians. Bill had almost not been able to go, but Richie starting to cry convinced him enough that whatever was going on was a lot worse than he thought- and he already thought it was pretty bad.

That's how they all ended up in Richie's living room, a crap ton of snack wrappers, stray food, and pizza boxes littered around them, all waiting for whatever it was Eddie had to tell them to come out.

It did when Eddie paused the movie they were watching, and all eyes looked to him.

"Okay." He said quietly. "Okay, I already told Richie this... and, it's bad. It's really-" He pauses, takes a shaky breath so he doesn't cry, then swallows.

"I can tell them." Richie offers.

Eddie nods and wipes his nose. "That would be great. Thanks, Rich."

"So," Richie begins, clapping his hands together. He's about to speak when he's stopped.

"How bad is it?" Stan interrupts, clasping his hands together. "I- this is already really bad and I don't know how it can get worse, but you guys are making it seem like it's bad."

"On a scale of one to ten." Beverly adds.

Eddie looks down at his wrist, a faint birthmark he's always had there: a light, discolored number that looks like '012', a scar that never changed colors even when he got tanned. "A twelve." He answers softly. "Just tell them, please." He looks to Richie.

"Cool. So, Sonia kidnapped him when he was two, but they found his twin sister who exists apparently, and he's going to Indiana to live with them for a while. It's pretty bad."

"Okay, Richie. Now, the real reason, please?" Bev sighs, looking tired.

"No, that's it." Eddie nods. "I leave in two days."

The silence that settles over everyone is deafening. Soon, it breaks out into an assault of questions Eddie does not have the answer to- instead, Richie offers him his bed to sleep in, and Eddie's unconscious in minutes.

4. 4

"Bye, Stan." Eddie says quietly, pulling out of their hug and wiping a tear off. After two days of staying with Richie, it was time to go.

Dr. Owens and a social worker, Ms. Celina Levitt, who stayed quiet and didn't talk to Eddie once, came to pick him up at 5:00 AM to begin their sixteen hour drive; Eddie had refused to leave until he got to say bye to all of the Losers. Luckily, they were all expecting this, and Mike had been over at Stan's house so nobody took too long to get there. They all gathered in a group hug with Eddie in the center for their goodbye, promising to visit and write letters and such. Then they had moved to individual goodbyes.

Eddie saved Richie for last, since he was his hardest goodbye. The best friend he's ever had, and ever will have.

Not bothering to think of the consequences of everyone watching, Eddie reached up and pulled Richie's face to him by the back of his neck and kissed him wordlessly. They stay in the position for only a moment, ignoring the reactions of the others around them. Then he pulls back. "Bye, Rich."

"Bye, Eds."

"Don't call me that." He laughs, and Richie does, too.

Then he gets in the car and leaves.

They departed at around 6:15 AM, so they were schedule to arrive at around 10:15 PM, probably closer to 11:00 or later because of traffic and stopping for food.

Eddie had not expected that when he slipped into the black van with three suitcases of everything he's bringing to find two armed guards, but he got used to them by the third hour. That was not the strangest aspect to the ride, however- that came about six hours in, when the van pulled over to a McDonalds and Dr. Owens turned around in the passenger seat to face Eddie. "Why don't we go in, son? Stretch our legs?"

The idea of fresh air seems great to Eddie, so he follows the man out of the car. When he gets out, he takes a few deep breaths. They weren't on a busy road, but a few cars passed every so often. He walks with him into the McDonalds, ignoring the part of him screaming that's it's unhealthy and he'll get diabetes- that's Sonia's voice, not his. He orders a six piece chicken nugget and a water, feeling rude to ask for anything more. Dr. Owens doesn't get anything.

They receive food, but instead of going back to the car, Dr. Owens asks to take a walk. Eddie agrees.

"Have you ever done anything... abnormal?"

Eddie thinks about killing It. "As in...?" He asks, because he's certainly done his fair share of abnormal things, and murder (?) is one of them.

"As in you made things happen. With your mind."

Eddie raises his eyebrows, wondering if this man is trying to play a joke to get his mind off of being separated from all his friends. "No." He says definitively. He's done some odd things but that isn't one of them.

The man makes an odd noise and nods his head, considering the information bestowed upon him. In wonder, Eddie watched the mans casual maneurisms completely contrast every assumption Eddie's yet to make of him. "How long have you been off your meds, Eddie?"

"Uh... a little over seven months, for the most part. I took them a few times to appease my... mom... but I haven't been taking them regularly." He answers. This was the kind of question he was expecting from the doctor-scientist.

"And the twelve tattoo on your wrist? How's that?"

"The-" Eddie blinks at him and lets out a short laugh. "That's not a tattoo, no, I would never get a tattoos- I- it's a weird birthmark, not a tattoo."

Owens sighs.

"That was a lie, wasn't it?"

"I imagine your mother tried to have it removed."

"What's oh-twelve mean?"

"It was your identification number." The man says coolly, like *oh, everyone has an identification number*, that's totally not a thing that Stan said had happened in the Holocaust. *Yeah, and they shaved your head, too.*

"My... what?"

Owens sighs, stopping in his tracks, so Eddie does the same. He stands next to the scientist, waiting. At this point, he's prepared to hear anything; life is beating the shit out of him and he's just along for the ride.

"Well, legally, I had to make sure you didn't tell you friends this, so I decided it would be best if we waiting until you left. You see, Frank didn't exactly kidnap you- well, he did, but it was because you were, essentially, a lab rat."

Eddie blinks. He was not expecting that.

"Your sister, number eleven, wasn't as lucky, but she made her way out about ten years after you."

"Ten?" Eddie breaths out, briefly wondering if this whole story is made up and maybe someone's just out there fucking with him. Except he believes it. He knows, somewhere, that what Owens says is the truth, and that's the worse part of it. It could have been him as a lab rat and Eleven- *oh, that's why her friends call her that!*- living as Jane in Derry. Eddie wonders if Sonia and It were worse than whatever Eleven had to endure, but they probably weren't. Definitely weren't.

"She's okay, now. It's been more than three years. She's adjusting well. Started school a few months ago, now that everything's in order."

"What- what wasn't in order?"

Owens laughs. "Let's get back to the van. Eat your nuggets."

Notes for the Chapter:

they'll be separated for a while but don't worry...
you'll get reddie soon...

5. 5

There's a knock on the door at a little past 12:00 AM, and Eleven doesn't bother checking who. She stands up from the couch, where she was waiting with Hopper, watching TV (which was really cool since it was way past her bed time).

Hopper told her that when Owens called to tell they were on their way; he explained that Twelve knew nothing of his powers, and therefore he didn't know any of Eleven's or about any Gates or monsters. Just that he was the lucky twin who got out.

That's fine. Eleven's not angry about it. She isn't. She just wonders why whoever chose Eddie chose *him* and not *her*. Not that she's judging,

She honestly doesn't know what to expect, but she has a clear mental image: criminal chain smoker murderer. Someone like Kali and her friends, or maybe someone like them except with no morals at all. She can't imagine her secret twin brother being anything but trouble.

She unlocks the door and opens it the normal way so as not to use her powers, as Hopper instructed her to do until they can sit him down and talk to him.

Eleven opens the door and in front of her she sees... well- a surprise, for sure.

The boy has curly hair that seems neat and meticulously put in place. His t-shirt is white, but over it he's wearing a pink Hawaiian shirt that looks way too big on him, like it isn't his. It probably isn't, because it's crinkled, unlike the rest of his outfit. He's wearing red shorts that are shorter than Will's with rainbow stripes on the pockets. And he's wearing a fanny pack.

This kid is so far from the badass she'd imagined, yet she's not disappointed. Not at all.

He looks like her.

She takes one glance at him and that's it- this is real. There's no way on Earth that boy isn't her twin brother.

"Hi." He says breathlessly. "I'm... Eddie." The slack look of shock on his face is enough to show Eleven that he's feeling the same that she is.

"I'm El." She responds, and extends her hand to shake his. He looks at her for a moment before shaking, and while they do so, Eleven takes the moment to glance at his wrist, finding it bare. She pauses, then abandons any thought of acting nonchalant. She pulls his wrist forward in front of her face, scanning it for any sign of a number. She finds it- faintly, 012.

The act of her pulling his wrist had pulled him inside the house, and Dr. Owens followed in behind him. He exchanges a few words with Hopper, two guys bring in three suitcases, then they're gone.

Just Eleven and Eddie.

"So... uh, I got a blow up mattress for now, in El's room." Hopper says, pointing to El's door. She exchanges a look with him, and can see he thought the same things: that his assumptions were wrong.

"Thank you." Eddie replies quietly, tugging at the hem of not-his Hawaiian shirt. "For everything. Letting me stay here."

"You don't have to thank me, kid." Hopper reassures him.

Eleven adds, "You're family."

The boys eyes widen, and he nods without saying anything else.

Hopper continues. "Food's in the fridge, you're always welcome to it. If you need anything, just ask. We have a few rules to go over, but that can wait for tomorrow morning."

The door opens, and Eddie is face to face with, undeniably, his twin sister. She's in pajamas, and her hairs pulled back into a bun- she's undeniably beautiful, too. Not in a creepy, incestual way, but just as

a fact.

The man on the couch behind her, Jim Hopper, has scruffy facial hair. He's more on the chubby side, but nothing Sonia, and he's looking at him with bewilderment.

"Hi." He Eddie says, not know what else to do other than introduce himself. "I'm... Eddie." It's weird seeing people he's only heard of as *real people*, especially when he shares a face with one of them. Except for a few adjustments because of gender, he and Eleven look the same.

"I'm El." His sister replies, moving to shake his hand. The gesture is so oddly formal that Eddie genuinely doesn't react for a solid two seconds before urging himself not to be stupid and to stop thinking about the germs on her hand. She looks for a tattoo, and upon finding nothing, her confusion is evident. She pulls him closer to her to examine more closely, causing him to almost trip on a step into the house.

Then she drops her wrist, and they stare at each other.

Eddie didn't even realize that Owens and the others had left until Jim started talking.

"So... uh, I got a blow up mattress for now, in El's room." He explains, pointing to a blue-green door that must be the aforementioned room.

"Thank you. For everything. Letting me stay here."

"You don't have to thank me, kid." Jim states, almost uncomfortably.

"You're family." His sister adds. The words are foreign, coming from a stranger. Richie, Bill, Stan, Bev, Mike, and Ben were his family. Sonia was, too. And now this random girl and her adopted father are, even though it wasn't anything Eddie had planned. The idea of having this entire new family thrust upon him still boggles his mind to the point where he isn't even sure if this is real or not.

Jim starts to rattle off more information. "Food's in the fridge, you're always welcome to it. If you need anything, just ask. We have a few rules to go over, but that can wait for tomorrow morning." He

explains. The casual demeanor makes Eddie's head spin- it's been doing a lot of that, lately.

"Eggs?" El asks, her eyes lighting up,

Jim laughs. "Sure. A triple decker extravaganza."

Eleven turns to him, a happy expression on her face. "Do you like Eggs?" She asks expectantly.

Eddie knows what Eggs are- they were in his old house. Sonia loved them, but Eddie couldn't eat them. They weren't good for a growing boy, apparently. Bullshit. All of it. "I've never tried them." He admits.

Eleven's smile falters. She looks momentarily confused. "Well, you try them tomorrow."

6. 6

"We've got three rules here, okay? All you need to do is follow them. Easy?"

"Only three?" Eddie asks. He had so many rules at home he couldn't count them. Once again, the world feels loopy, and Eddie starts to wonder if he's sick or something.

Hopper nods and holds up three fingers. "Three." He puts his hand down. "First, you ask me before you leave. You need *permission*."

Eddie nods. That was easy enough.

"Second, you clean up after yourself. Every mess you make is your own. You make your bed, you clean your dishes, and if you break something, you fix it. Okay?"

Eddie nods again.

"And the last is, if you bring any girls here- the door stays open three inches. Got it? If Eleven is with you and her then it's fine, but there's *no* being alone. Not on my watch."

Eddie suppresses a laugh and nods for a final time.

"There's a fourth rule, too, but it's unofficial." Eleven adds on. She is sitting next to Eddie on the couch while Jim is in front of them. "Don't be stupid."

This makes Eddie actually laugh this time, although it isn't a full one. "I think I can manage."

"Alright." Jim says, clapping his hands together. "Now it's time to get to business. Eleven?"

His sister raises her eyebrows. "Right now?"

"Sure. Go for it."

Eleven stands up, closes her eyes, and takes a shaky breath in. "Please

don't freak out." She pleads. Then she opens her eyes back up and extends her open palm to a board game set on the coffee table.

Slowly, it rises into the air and remains there.

It floats.

(you'll float too you'll float too we all float down here and you'll float too)

Then it lowers back down. Eddie knows he should be in more shock, but of course, his life sucks, so it's only natural his sister is connected in some way to Pennywise. Of course. Why would he have ever thought that leaving Derry could have been any good? He's separated from all his friends. Who even *are* these people?

"Eddie?" She asks softly upon seeing his reaction- or lack thereof.

Eddie refocuses her attention to her, rather than his own thoughts of bodies floating in the air, of the bright orange lights that swallow you whole Beverly told them about. "You're not- you're not a monster, right?"

Her eyes widen. "I am *not*!"

"Okay." Eddie sighs. "Fuck it. Okay." Then he catches Hopper's eyes and hastily apologizes for cursing, but he didn't seem to mind. He just throws his hands up and shrugs. Eddie cracks a small smile at him. Nothing with teeth.

Eleven looks at Hopper, asking him a silent question. It seems that the two are very close, which Eddie finds himself envying- none of his friends ever had close relationships with their parents, except for sort of Ben, so Eddie never saw a child and parent interact like this. They know each other enough that they can talk without words.

Eddie understands he will never have a relationship like that. He never expected to. "I just found out my entire life is a lie. Nothing is really a shocker anymore." He shrugs. "And Dr. Owens wasn't very subtle."

"We think you can do it, too." Eleven quickly rushes out.

That shocks Eddie. But, "No, I can't." He shakes his head. If he could make things float or move without his brain, he would have known by now- except, hadn't Owens said something about that? And everything else he's said seems to be true. Eddie picks up his feet from the floor and brings them up so he can sit cross-legged.

"The pills you took- Owens doesn't think they were placebos. They were suppressants." Hopper continues. "They've probably left your system by now, or will soon, but that doesn't mean anything if you don't," Jim makes a vague gesture with his hands. "try."

"To make something fly? Yeah, I can't do that."

"You can." Eleven says. "You can, because I can. And we- even if we don't remember it, we were together. Siblings."

Eddie doesn't think he can. He's never known anything of this kind of life, but Jim and El are looking at him with expectant, encouraging faces and he doesn't want to *already* be a disappointment on his first day meeting them. Hesitantly, he extends his hand like he saw his sister do, aiming at the board game. He tries to move it to the side without touching it, but just feels stupid. He can imagine Stan teasing him ("*You think you have superpowers?*") Anger spikes in him- this is so fucking stupid!- and that's when the game goes flying to the right and smashes into a wall.

"Ha!" He hears from Jim.

Eddie freezes. Eleven beams, and excitedly turns to her dad and say something. He responds, but Eddie doesn't hear a word.

He balls up his fists.

Holy fuck.

He thinks of Pennywise and the kids who floated. He thinks of sitting in a dirty kitchen, in pain, and helplessly crying because he couldn't move. He thinks of how he could have protected himself. He thinks of fighting Pennywise, of watching Richie's body slam into the ground so, so hard. He thinks of how he could have protected Richie.

He thinks of how his entire life he had been told he was weak, and a

few seconds ago he just found out he's *fucking unstoppable*.

7.7

It had taken El five walkie-talkie calls after Hopper left for work to tell all her friends that they needed to come over, and she that couldn't say anything else, which promptly worried everybody; she had to explain to each person that it wasn't bad news at all, just surprising. She would've used Code Red if it was one. But it wasn't!

"Just get your *ass* over here! Over and out!" She had eventually shouted into the walkie each time. 'Ass' is curse word she's learned from Max, along with others, but 'ass' is her favorite. It didn't take Eleven long to find that Eddie prefers 'fuck', which she understands.

Mike makes it to her house first, panting from pedaling so fast and frantically asking what's wrong. Eddie was sitting in El's room, reading the comics Dustin lent her because he insisted they reminded him of a friend from home. She makes Mike sit down and relax. "We'll wait until the others get here, okay?"

"So, nothing's wrong?"

"No."

"You're not hurt?"

"No! I already told you this! Do you not listen to me?" El complains loudly, just as the door opens.

"You have to listen when she speaks, Mike." Max points out, rolling her eyes. Lucas follows in behind her and they follow Mike to the couch, Max deciding to sit on the arm of the chair rather than the actual seat despite there being room. They all talk for a while until Dustin comes, and then Will a little after.

"So?" Lucas asks. "What's the big news?"

Eleven smiles. "I-"

Then there's a strangled shout from her bedroom and she pauses, listening to the sounds of jumping and something being stopped on.

Then the door gets thrown open and Eddie's head pops out, looking frantic. "Ellie, I just set your fucking pillow on fire?!" He shouts, a mix between a statement and a question. El wonders how the hell Eddie managed to do that and promptly swings open the door, revealing her pillow on the floor and very much on fire.

She runs into her room without thinking, not sure what to do.

Mike asks, "Who is that?"

"Did he just call you Ellie?" Will shouts.

"I got the extinguisher!"

Max appears at the doorway, aiming a fire extinguisher at the pillow and squeezing it, sending out a white cloud towards the fire. They fizzle out, leaving the group of teens frazzled and on edge.

Eddie was facing the pillow, but once the threat is gone, he pivots on his heel towards El. "You didn't tell me I can set things on fire!"

"I didn't know you can set things on fire!"

"Hey!" Dustin calls out, and the siblings stop their bickering to face him.

"Woah." Lucas looks at El, then to Eddie, then back again.

"This is Eddie. He's the big news." El explains, using her hand to present him to the others like he was a painting and not a person. Eddie waves. "He is... my twin brother."

Mike blinks at Eddie, scanning him up and down. The others have similar reactions, all ranging from confusion to.... well, just confusion.

"My parents died. That's why I'm here. It's a long story."

"I'm... sorry." Max says hesitantly.

"It's not the craziest thing that's happened to me." Eddie responds shortly.

"Well, I'm Max." She extends her hand towards him and he shakes it.

"I'm Eddie."

When nobody says anything else, El picks up the introductions. "That's Lucas. He's Max's boyfriend. That's Will. He's probably going to be our step-brother this time next year. That's Dustin; he has no collar bones. And that's Mike, my boyfriend."

Eddie smiles. "I have a friend named Mike at home." He says shyly.

"Where are you from?" Mike asks.

"Derry, Maine. I just got here yesterday and I learned about all of this," He motions to the room around him. "Three days ago. I'm sorry I set the pillow on fire. I didn't know I could do that."

El furrows her eyebrows. "I can't do that." She says. "I wonder what else you can do."

"That's probably it. I'm not special."

"Not special? Dude!" Dustin laughs, his entire face breaking out into a grin. He steps out in front of the group to address them all. "We got *another* friend with superpowers! This is awesome! We gotta tell Steve!"

"Can we have a Party meeting? Please?" Mike asks. The group settles and agrees, moving back outside El's room and into the living room, leaving Eddie behind. Before leaving, she asks him not to set fire to anything else as a joke, but he doesn't see it like that- he hurriedly apologizes and Eleven has to assure him she, or anyone in The Party, is not mad. He says okay, but she doesn't think he believes her.

"How much does he know?" Mike whispers. They're all standing in a circle, facing each other.

"Just about the powers." El confirms.

"Well, you're going to tell him about everything, right? He has the right to know." Will adds on.

"What?! No, he doesn't!" Mike counters.

Lucas scoffs. "Are you stupid? He's just like El! It's like, his culture!"

"I'm going to tell him. Friends *do not* lie. But I want to give him a while to get settled before I spring monsters on to him. He's uh..." El trails off, thinking about how he washed the sheets, blankets, and pillow cases for his blow up bed twice each before using them, and how he was up by 7:00 AM to sweep the kitchen. "He's not the monster-fighting type. He's not going to be a problem. I want you all to get along."

"Of course we'll get along!" Dustin grins. "Steve is going to be so psyched about this!"

"He's not a secret, right? We can tell Jonathon? And my mom?" Will asks.

"Everybody gets to meet him. He's family, now." El answers, then turning to Mike with a look that resembles a glare. "He's my family."

Notes for the Chapter:

eds met the party! i hope you liked it :)

8. 8

Meeting 'The Party' had not been at all what Eddie was expecting. He certainly didn't mean to set a pillow on fire- he was just reading a comic about superheroes when he started thinking about Richie someone, and suddenly his back felt pleasantly warm and then he realized it was on *fucking fire*.

When he met the others, they all seemed confused and shocked, but the one without collar bones, according to El, seemed pretty excited. He liked the energy Dustin (or Justin?) gave off. Mike seemed crushingly reluctant to accept him, Lucas was just in shock; Max seemed in shock too, but she at least had introduced herself. Will was harder to read than the rest of them, but he sort of reminded him of himself.

He can tell they're all hiding a secret.

That's okay. Eddie was too, and he had no intention of ever letting any of them know about It. He decides this when they all leave the room to focus what Eddie assumes to be the overhanging secret he felt was whispered in the walls of the room, a pulsing energy between them.

The door is opened by the redheaded girl he thinks is Beverly at first glance, when he had just met her before she cut her hair and had helped him, Bill, and Stan shoplift. "Sorry about that." She says, smiling. "I moved here a bit more than a year ago, so I know how it feels to be new." Max continues, doing her best to sympathize. "And I didn't have superpowers! Ha. Yeah." She raises her eyebrows really high and does an awkward movement with her hands that makes Eddie laugh.

"Thanks... uh, Max, right?"

"Yeah. It's technically *Maxine*, if you were wondering why I've got a boy's name."

"I wasn't."

"Oh. Okay."

After that, Eddie walks out of his room instead of standing inside and talking to just Max, who was hanging by the doorframe. They both go to living room in front of them and sit down with the others. Will and Mike are next to each other, and Lucas and Max are next to each other, while Eleven makes sure to stay by Eddie's side. He doesn't mind at all. Dustin orbits around the group, walking around and never sitting in one place for too long. They all started talking, asking Eddie about some simple things, or breaking off into a conversation of their own that Eddie just listens to. He feels like an outsider, which hasn't been a common feeling ever since the entire Losers club got together. Luckily, or maybe purposefully, nobody asks about how Eddie found out about Eleven or why he came here.

Lucas and Dustin (not Justin!) fell into a debate over someone named Suzie (*"She saved the entire world!" "Shut up, Dustin!"*) when Will turned to Eddie. "Are you starting school with us tomorrow?"

Eddie perks up at the chance to be part of a conversation. Lucas had started singing something at Dustin in a mocking tone, and Max joined in cheerily. Dustin tells them to shut up. They do not. "I don't really know. Hopper and I haven't talked much yet. He just gave me the three rules and then went to work."

"Probably Monday next week." Eleven supplies. "We can show him around."

Monday next week came faster than Eddie expected. Owens showed up at some point with a birth certificate, naming Eddie "Eddie Hopper", which was super uncomfortable and awkward but probably legally necessary. Now, he existed in the eyes of the government and could start going to school- apparently, Eleven had also only just started two months ago, so he wasn't the only one a little confused. And plus, he had gone to school before. She told him a little of her time in the lab, and about how she was only recently legally adopted by Jim and debuted to the world. She insisted that were going through it together. Eddie just felt bad, because they weren't. They were in similar situations, but Eleven was surrounded by people who

love her.

Eddie isn't. He hopes, at the very least, Eleven will come to love him, even if no one else does. She's his sister. Actually, biologically, and legally his sister in every way.

So far, he's managed to not set anything else on fire. There hasn't been any huge developments, mostly because Eddie didn't want to find any. He locked the door one time while sitting a few feet away on the bed, which was useful, and he had accidentally knocked over a glass of water but caught it without using his hands. The water still spilled on the floor, but he didn't break a glass. He would've felt terrible if he had broken anything.

Now, he sits in his first day science class, next to Eleven in the back of the class. This is apparently The Party's favorite class, because the teacher is supposed to be really cool. Eddie didn't know adults can do that.

"And we have *another* new student joining us today! Dustin, you know the drill." Mr. Clarke starts. Dustin begins a drumroll on the desk and Eddie feels his cheeks flush. "The newest member of our curiosity voyage is... Edward! Come on, stand up! Tell us about yourself!"

"Uh..." Eddie doesn't stand because he hates the attention, but he doesn't want to stay quiet. "You can just call me Eddie. And, uh, E-Jane, is my twin. That's all." He looks down at his desk, deciding that that's enough.

"I didn't know that you had a twin, Jane! Well, it's great to meet you, Eddie. Now. Time for something new- electron configuration. To start, I need to tell you guys about *orbitals* and *sublevels*."

The day drones on and on. They all meet up at lunch, finally, and score a table outside on a blue picnic table. Everyone gets a seat, except Max ends up sitting on the end of the actual table, cross-legged because she "doesn't have to comply to social rules created by a male-dominated society where men are too cowardly to sit on tables", which promptly caused Lucas to sit on the other end of the table, mirroring her to prove he isn't a coward. Eddie and the others

were laughing the whole time, and Mike insisted that sitting normally wasn't even a "male" thing to do, just a normal thing. Eleven must have been able to tell that Max was going to rant, because she simply placed her hand on Max's knee to silently tell her to stop, even if she was smiling fondly.

All was going well. Though he didn't pick up on some of their jokes here and there, and they didn't include him as much, his involvement with the group was quickly increasing. Dustin seemed amazed that there was another person in the group with powers, Max sympathized with him, and Will was genuinely nice to him. Lucas and Mike were a little more weary, but nobody was rude. After a little while, Lucas and Max dismount the table and sit normally. Everything's going fine, and Eddie snatches one of Will's fries.

Everything is going fine until some asshole saunters up to the table, trailed by another asshole. They never travel alone.

Like butt cheeks.

"There's another freak in the freak show?" He hisses. El glares daggers at him. "What, you're gonna break my arm again, in the middle of school?"

Eddie raises his eyebrows at El, who shrugs it off. Nice to know his sister is a total badass. He can't imagine some kid who would just walk up and call him a freak didn't deserve to get his arm broken. "Screw off, Troy. She can make you pee your pants, again. Unless you've prepared with a diaper." Dustin snaps.

"You pissed yourself?" Eddie snickers. He had initially gotten Henry Bowers vibes from this Troy, but Henry Bower's didn't *piss* himself. He just *murdered* people.

"Shut up, fairy!" The boy snarls and slams his hands down on the table, leaning forward threateningly. El's about to stand, but Eddie puts his hand on her shoulder.

"Sounds to me like you're overcompensating." Eddie says. Troy blinks at him. "What? Is that too big of a word for you? You have the bladder of a baby and apparently the vocabulary of one, too."

Mike lets out a sharp laugh then covers his mouth to stifle it, and all the others have similar reactions. Max's eyes are wide and El is grinning mischievously. Troy grunts. "You better watch yourself, new kid!" He shouts.

"Or what?"

"I've got a knife in my back pocket." He snarls, like it's scary.

Eddie narrows his eyes, thinking of H-shaped scars and bodies tumbling down wells. He laughs in Troy's face, and the bully grunts, slams his foot down, and storms off with his middle finger in the air.

9. 9

"You better watch yourself, new kid!" Troy shouts, balling up his fists. He and her brother exchange a few more words, but it results in Troy marching away, followed by his friend.

El had thought that Eddie was a goody-two shoes, considering the way he act and dressed and brushed his teeth three times a day. Apparently, the kid has some spunk. Good.

El watches him steal another fry from under Will's nose and bite into it. "Dude!" Lucas exclaims. "You totally just pissed Troy off."

"So?"

"Well, you can't exactly use your powers on him. They're a secret. You have to deal with it... the old-fashioned way." Mike lowers his voice at the last part. "Plus, there was this one time I jumped off a cliff because he threatened to knife Dustin if I didn't, and then El had to bring me back up. Then she broke his arm without touching him. And she made him piss himself. It's pretty awesome."

"Yes, please enlighten us with how much you adore your girlfriend some more!" Lucas deadpans.

"All I'm saying is that he's suspicious of us already. We don't want any... news getting out."

"It's fine. I can deal with it the old-fashioned way." Eddie picks at the peeling blue paint on the bench, pulling some off and then flicking it at the grass.

Dustin leans forwards and whispers, "Like, *fight* him?" He asks, as if Eddie hadn't heard Dustin use 'bitch', 'fuck', and 'shitty dirtbag' in the same sentence yesterday and he were the most innocent being in the world.

"He's not the first bully I've encountered." Eddie shrugs. "I had a few Derry. It took a while, but me and my friends eventually stood up to him."

"How?" Will questions, looking in the direction of where Troy had stormed off to. El thinks about when Troy had called Will a fairy when he thought he was dead, a fact they all seemed to accidentally leave out when recounting the tales to Will.

"Um..." Eddie frowns. "Well, Henry Bowers was a lot worse than Troy. And very racist."

"They always are." Lucas tuts.

"How can anyone be worse than Troy? The kid has no heart."

"Henry tried to carve his name in Ben's stomach with a knife." Eddie offers. Will gasps and Max leans forward, closer to Eddie. "He tried to run Mike Hanlon over with his car. And he shot him in the head with a bolt gun. Mike would've died if he hadn't hit Henry's hand away at the last second." Eddie explain further upon seeing all of their interested faces. The others gape at him. "It's okay. Mike pushed him down a well."

"Did he... die?"

"That was the plan, but he got out of the well." Eddie frowns. The story he was telling is most likely not as casual as he's making it out to be. *(he's hiding something he's hiding something big that you should know about because you're his sister does he not trust you? you're hiding something you're hiding something big)*

"Holy shit!" Dustin exclaims. "What did you guys do?"

"Nothing. He got arrested because he killed his old man. And a ton of other people." Everyone just stares at Eddie. "So, Troy can go blow his dad."

The group is silent until El breaks out in laughter. "I thought you were a goody-two shoes! Because you're a compulsive cleaner and you wear a fanny pack!" She laughs, burying her face in her hands. "Eddie, tell us more about Derry."

Eddie smiles and launches into a story about a rock war he had with Henry and his friends, speaking extremely fast and constantly getting his focus broken by going on mini-tangents about other stories of all

the cool things his friends have done, like cursing in their bar-mitzvah speech and building secret clubhouses. El watches her brothers face light up at certain parts, especially when he talks about his best friend Richie, and watches his entire demeanor change as he discusses his friends.

"The adults in my town *sucked*. Every one of them. Bev's dad was probably the worst."

"Beverly sounds cool. A badass redhead. Remind you of anyone, stalker?" Max asks, teasingly fluttering her eyelashes.

"Yeah, El with red hair."

Max gasps. "Screw you!"

"Oh! There was this one time in Bev's house, and her bathroom was just *covered* in blood-" Eddie stops.

"Covered in blood?" Mike questions.

"Great. Eddie's a serial killer." Will grumbles, clearly joking.

Eddie doesn't seem to get the joke. "No! No, not at all!" He says frantically. "Beverly just got an insane nosebleed. The bathroom wasn't really covered. I was exaggerating." He says, trying to seem casual, but something seems off. Does she think her brother is a serial killer? No. Is he hiding something? Yes. *(yes something big something very big you can feel it you can actually feel it what is he so scared of?)* But aren't they all hiding something? They each decide not to question it, and soon Eddie is telling another story about the quarry by his house that was low enough that you wouldn't die if you jumped.

Notes for the Chapter:

i'm writing the climax of the story as i post this. shit's cray.

10. 10

Eddie has to be dreaming. He has to be. There's no other way this makes sense. He was staring into the darkness, unable to sleep, listening to Eleven's soft snores when he was suddenly standing in a large, dark, empty room with warm water just under his toes.

Across from him is Bill Denbrough's bed, but nothing else from his room. On top of the bed is Bill himself, and with him is Richie. Currently, they're both sitting up, in pajamas, Richie's head shoved into Bill's chest while he sobs. Bill's rubbing his back comfortingly. "C-can't you call him?" Bill is whispering while Richie does his best to subdue himself. Every noise his two friends make has an echo reverberating around Eddie's head.

"It's not the same, Bill. I miss him."

"I m-miss him, too."

There's a lull in the conversation filled with Richie's hiccups. "I think I'm in love with him. I should have told him."

"He knows, Richie. Eddie knows."

And then suddenly Eddie is pulled out of whatever dream he's in, he's clamoring off of his mattress, he's turning on the lights, he's doubling over and puking.

"Eddie? Eddie!" Eleven gasps and tosses herself out of bed to his side as he shakes. He's crying. When had he started crying?

He wipes his mouth with the back of his hand. "Sorry. I'm sorry." He mumbles. His tongue tastes gross.

"Don't apologize. What happened?"

Eddie thinks about the dark room and Richie and love, and he responds with no answer other than sobbing. How could he ever tell El? How could he ever express that the person he loves wants is a boy who he'll never get to have a chance with?

"It was like... like nighttime. And there was water at the bottom." Eddie explains to El after she calmed him down with a glass of milk. She nods understandingly.

"Yes. The Void. I can do it, too. I was going to show you how- I need a blindfold and TV static to do it- but I guess that you don't." She smiles and grabs Eddie's hand. She noticed that he can do what she can do and more, which she tries not to let bother her. He had been in the lab for ten less years than her and been suppressed his whole life- how come he gets the super cool, advanced powers? But then she reminds herself that she should be happy for her brother, and she always gets herself back on track. "I think you might be cooler than me." She jokes.

Eddie laughs at the idea of being cool, which causes Eleven's smile to grow fonder. She's known Eddie for a little over a week now, but she feels whole. A part of her has always been missing, a part she searched for and almost found in Kali, but Kali was wrong. Eddie is who she was looking for. Eddie, who fits in with her friends and is secretly a badass, and, at any given time, might physically fight Troy. El still doesn't know if he'd win or not, but she's sure the fight would be interesting nonetheless.

"So, who did you see?" She asks, cocking her head to the side. Eddie frowns. "Whenever I go in, it's usually to find someone. That's how it works."

"I saw Ben. The one who built the clubhouse. I was thinking about him, and then suddenly, he was there." Eddie explains to her. "He was getting a midnight snack. Pretzels and hummus. He likes that."

El furrows her eyebrows. "Then why did you throw up?"

Eddie shrugs and swallows. "It was just shocking to be in... that place. And to see Ben. I miss all of them- so much." He continues.

El is being lied to, and she knows this. She'd be willing to bet her life on the fact that Eddie did not see Ben, but she doesn't call him out on

this. Instead, she simply nods. "It can totally be scary if you weren't expecting it. I can teach you what I know about controlling it tomorrow morning. Let's get some sleep, okay?"

The next morning, El did her best to teach him everything. Focus on one noise, one person, and make sure you're in total darkness.

He got the hang of it right away, choosing to look for Beverly this time. He found her in her bathing suit- maybe her bra and underwear- and laying on a towel, sunglasses resting on her face. She's at the quarry, which means that-

A wisp of something dust-like appears approaching her and slowly materializes as Ben, sitting down next to her. "Made you something." He smiles, holding out a flower crown in his hands. Bev props herself up on one elbow and beams as she accepts the gift, placing it on her head. Eddie takes a step closer to them as Bev turns to face someone he can't see.

"Look, Stan!" She giggles. Her and Ben both have the same echo to their voice. As she speaks, a few more dust clouds come to be and take the forms of Richie, Bill, and Stan. "I've got a crown, too."

Stan scoffs. "Mine's better." He says, spinning something around his wrist, which Eddie realizes is a flower crown. He stops spinning it, and when Eddie can take a good look, he objectively agrees that Stan's crown is better than Ben's; Beverly doesn't seem to mind at all, wearing it proudly. Stan gets up from his rock that he's sitting on and places it in the air- Eddie thinks he's about to drop it when Mike appears. Stanley rests his crown on Mike's head wordlessly then goes back to his seat.

Eddie smiles, deciding to try to say something. Maybe they'd hear him. "...Beverly?" He asks, since she was the one he initially decided to look for. She didn't notice.

But as soon as he spoke, Richie's head had snapped to face him.

Then he was back in the living room.

"So? It worked?" El asks expectantly.

Eddie blinks, adjusting himself back to the light around him and the sudden change of scenery- Eleven insisted he needed a blindfold, but had managed without, which impressed her. "Can people hear you when you talk in there?"

"No. Not... normally. I'll explain more later."

Eddie nods his head. "I went to see Beverly, but I saw all the Losers because they were together." He presses his lips together. "And I think Richie heard me."

El's eyes widen. "Did he look weird? Act weird? Is Beverly okay? She wasn't bad screaming, right?"

"What? No. Why would she be screaming?"

Eddie scans his sister's face, which is full of concern. "Okay." She says, standing up from her previously seated position in front of him. "Okay, it's time for you to meet everyone else. It's been long enough. You're settled in. Your real bed frame should be arriving soon." She says, wiping her palms on her jeans. "Shitbucket." She says. She read that one in a book about bees. "I need to radio Dad. You need to-" She stops her pacing. "You need to learn the rest of it."

"Of what?"

Eleven frowns. "Everything."

Notes for the Chapter:

perhaps things are going to get a little strange?
maybe?

11. 11

Joyce and Jonathon are both very nice. Eddie's heard about them because Joyce and Hopper went on a few dates since he got there, and Will mentioned his brother sometimes, but Eddie never got to see them until now. Jonathon had slowly started the process of not picking Will up from school every few days, until eventually, by the time Eddie came, Will biked home with the others like before "Everything" happened.

He had also heard about Nancy through Mike, and about Steve, Robin, and Erica through Dustin. It actually taken Eddie a considerable amount of time to realize Erica and Lucas were siblings because of how little Lucas talked about her- Eddie had been surprised when they all gathered in the Byers house and saw a little girl with rainbows on her overalls and bright clips in her hair.

This is where he stands, in a group of people, but feeling totally alone.

They were telling him what they deemed as: Everything.

"Everything" included monsters, and scientists, and death, and Russians, and most of all it included Eddie's sister, who seemed to be at the center of it all. Which placed him in the center, too- maybe a little to the left.

When the group finishes, Eddie thinks of Pennywise, who's been around since the beginning of man- perhaps, the source of energy the Gates feed off of. He silently mulls this over, trying to place the clown into the equation.

"Eddie?" Jim prompts, looking over him. This snaps Eddie back to the conversation. "You good?"

"I'm fine. It's just... a lot."

"But you believe it?" The girl standing next to Steve-Robin- asks.

Eddie nods his head. "If- if *I* can set things on fire and make them

move- with my *brain*- then I'm sure that portals to other dimensions or whatever can open up." He reasons, electing to ignore that he's killed his own monster. Maybe, sin Pennywise, he would have never believed it, but Pennywise made anything possible. Did Pennywise literally make "Everything" possible? Was It the reason-

Joyce, who was previously leaning against her kitchen counter, stands up straight. "Set things on fire?" She asks.

"Uh, yes." Eddie replies. He just his chin towards a candle and it lights, making Erica let little a soft 'woah' and Lucas telling her to shut up. Eddie tried to make the action seem casual, but really he had been practicing that trick ever since he set El's pillow on fire. He still feels bad about that; it was about two weeks ago, even though it felt like much longer.

Joyce scans him over, an intense look of focus on her face as she does so. "What else can you do that Eleven can't?"

From the corner of his eye, he watches Eleven wince. He'll ask her about it later. "Just that." He says with a shrug. "I think that's all."

The group disbanded after a while, slowly whittling down to just the Byers, the Hoppers, and Eddie, who doesn't exactly consider himself anything but a Kaspbrak yet. Steve and Robin were still there, too, but only because Steve had to talk to Jonathon. Robin splayed herself over a chair, her head hanging upside down over the armrest, her feet hanging of the other. Her hands are crossed over her stomach. On the couch, Eddie was talking to Will, but he got up to join the conversation his mother, Hopper, and Eleven were in. That left Robin alone with Eddie.

"So... you and Steve are dating?" He asks, trying to start a conversation and not knowing what to say now that Will was gone. Steve and Robin had stayed connected at the hip the entire time, making each other laugh and flicking each other, so it wasn't an illogical assumption.

Robin let's out a 'ha!' and turns her head to face him. "Everyone always asks us that. No, we're just good friends." She says, then lifts her hands and wiggles her fingers. "I'm a lesbian." She raises her

eyebrows to wiggle them, too. Eddie stares at her, his eyes wide as she drops her hands back down to rest on her stomach. He had no idea there were people who were out in Hawkins- and Robin being so casually out to a complete stranger must mean that she's out to everybody, which means nobody here is homophobic which is *pretty fucking good*. "You're not gonna set me on fire, are you?" She asks, only halfway joking.

"No! No, I don't care. Why would I care? You can... like girls. I don't care."

She crinkles her nose. "You're one of the people who are weird about it, aren't you?"

"No! Sorry. I just didn't know. I'm sorry-"

Robin lets out another laugh, revealing perfectly and ironically straight teeth. "I'm messing with you, my small child friend."

Eddie nods and smiles to himself. It felt pretty cool to be grouped in with the others as one of Robin's "small children friends" that he had learned she called the Party. It meant that, in some way, he was a part of them.

Not that he's in the Party. He played Dungeons and Dragons with Ben, Bill, and Mike Hanlon once, and he didn't like. Plus, he has his own club, thank you very much.

It still felt nice to be a part of something, though.

Steve appears at the doorway. "Yo, Robin, let's go."

"Shut up, Harrington. Go start the car, I'll be there in a minute. I'm comfortable."

"Fucking impossible." Steve mumbles under his breath, turning around and flipping his keys around his fingers. With a new perspective, Eddie totally sees how the two are best friends and not lovers. Steve leaves the room and Robin takes a few seconds to watch him leave, tapping her feet against the air. When the door closes, she pops up from the chair.

"I like to annoy him." She explains with mischievous smile. "Maybe I'll just take a few more seconds." She stares at the door. Eddie stares at her. "Think that's long enough?" She asks, crossing her arms.

"Nearly." Eddie supplies.

"How are you liking Hawkins?"

"It's very different from Derry."

"I'm guessing there was no monsters back in Derry."

Eddie shrugs. "Nothing I couldn't handle."

"Of course not, Shorts."

Eddie furrows his eyebrows. "Did you just call me Shorts?"

"Yes."

The words, *Don't call me Shorts* almost slip off his tongue, but he suppresses them. The honk of a car come from outside, signaling to Robin that she should probably get going before Steve leaves her there.

"Bye, Shorts." Robin chuckles, giving him a two finger salute then leaving.

Eddie remains on the couch for a few moments before heading towards the door- Jim asks him where he's going but Eddie has no time to respond; he needs to catch Robin before she leaves. He practically kicks open the door and runs across the lawn. "Robin!" He calls out, stopping her halfway from the car.

"Yes, Shorts?" She asks, spinning on her heel and quirking up one eyebrow.

Eddie takes a deep breath in, shuts his eyes, exhales, and opens them again. "I- I'm gay. Nobody here knows, and I'd like it- I'd *really* like it if you'd keep it that way. But I just wanted someone to. To know."

Robin nods once, and does a zip-up-her-mouth-and-throw-away-the-

key motion. Then she spins back around to the car.

Notes for the Chapter:

i considered making eddie's reaction to learning everything about what happened in st a little more shocked, but nothing felt in character. i tried multiple times to write this chapter, but this is the version i felt fit best. eddie's entire life had been flipped upside down (haha) and he's already faced pennywise, so i thought this would be an appropriate reaction- sorry it's anticlimactic! there's still plenty more to come... also! eddie came out to robin! that's pretty snazzy.

12. 12

Notes for the Chapter:

this chapter contains one of my favorite scenes in this whole fic, even if it's a short part :) it's just... soft, okay?!

By now, Eleven's bedroom had been arranged to accommodate the both of them. Eddie's mattress arrived at the Byer's house, where Hopper picked it up from, and brought it to his, because he still doesn't trust the government, and thus he didn't trust any company enough to give out his address. Eddie didn't voice his thoughts, but he loved having a bed there- it made him feel like a part of something (*not a family, not yet, but something*) instead of just a visitor stopping by on a blow up mattress.

Eddie woke up to screams.

It was Eleven, crying out. Eddie had heard her talk in her sleep before- usually saying Mike's name or Max's- but he never heard her scream.

"Eleven!" Eddie whisper-yells across the room, testing if she is awake or not. When she didn't seem to be, he creeps towards her and tries shaking her. He's met with a gasp and suddenly being pushed back by an invisible force from his sister. However, he manages to keep his balance and repeat his sister's name- this time, she comes to her senses, gasping for air.

"Eddie. I'm sorry." She says in between shaky breath.

"I didn't mean to startle you." Eddie reaches out his hand towards her and she takes it gratefully.

"I used to have nightmares. But they stopped! They..." She allows her voice to trail off and she lets out a shuddering sob.

No idea what to do, Eddie wraps his arm around her in a way that

would be a hug had she not been clasping his other hand. Eleven doesn't protest the contact, instead leaning her head against Eddie.

"What was it?" Eddie asks quietly. Eleven hiccups and snuffles, but then scoots to the side in her bed, allowing room for Eddie. He takes the hint and sits next to her. Once he's settled, she rests her head back on his shoulder, closing her eyes.

"The Mind Flayer." She explains. "It's probably because we told you the story today. Brings up old memories."

"Oh. I'm... sorry."

"What? No." El shakes her head against him. "No, friends don't lie. Dad has his own rules, but that's mine. Friends don't lie. And you needed to know about all of it."

"Friends don't lie." Eddie repeats.

Eleven takes a shuddering breath in. "One of the first things Mike taught me when I met him."

"What was it like? In the lab? You never... talked about that."

El sits up, wiping her nose with the back of her hand. There was some snot running down that Eddie had elected to ignore. "It was not fun. There was Dr. Brenner, who ran it all. I called him Papa. But he wasn't anything like Dad."

"What did he do?"

"Oversaw the experiments. Like crushing a coke can. Crushing... other things." Eleven shudders, but this time, not from crying. "Put me in a giant isolation tank so I could communicate with the Upside Down. Put me in a-" She clears her throat. "In a locked, dark room when I misbehaved."

Eddie takes his sister's hand again, not knowing what else to say to that. *Sorry I got out and you didn't?* The best course of action for him is to stay silent as Eleven holds onto him, calming down second by second.

"How was your mom? Was she kind?" She asks, her eyebrows perking up slightly.

"She was horrible." Eddie responds with a tight, sad laugh. "She knew about my powers, and she still spent her entire life trying to teach me I'm weak. She convinced me I was sick. I always needed an inhaler and I brought medicine everywhere I went in my fanny pack. I don't do it anymore, but I can't lose the fanny pack. I don't know why." He frowns. "I think she hated me." He says. He never told anyone that before, but he thought about it a lot. He used to stay up at night wondering if she loved him, and when he found the answer was no after discovering his pills were placebos (*not gazebos, according to Stan*) and she separated him from all his friends, a new question surfaced. *Does she hate me?* The answer, he supposed, was yes. He just never knew what he did to deserve it. "She hated me because I was the reason Frank died. But that was also the reason why she couldn't abandon me."

"I'm sorry, Eddie." She squeezes his hand. "I wish we found each other sooner."

Eddie sighs. If he found Eleven sooner, she would have had to go through It, and that would probably drag all her friends in, too. He'd have to go through the Upside Down monsters, which means he might have inflicted it upon his friends, too. "We found each other when we needed each other. I think it was pretty good timing."

Eleven is silent for a long, long while, and Eddie realizes she fell asleep. He does, too.

"Usually, my power work better when I'm angry, but I've been working on them for a while now." Eleven explains, dragging the coffee table across the room with her hands, creating a scraping noise across the entire room. Eddie watches her, confused. They were still in their pajamas from last night and Jim had just left them after breakfast, which was Eleven's favorite, Eggos. Eddie tends to lean more towards Ellio's Cheese Pizza. Jim insists they both need to eat broccoli. Eleven stops once the coffee table is pressed all the way to the wall, slapping her hands together to wipe them off and then

placing them in her hips. "Put it back." She says.

Eddie raises his eyebrow, then just decides to do as Eleven says. He takes a step forward the table.

"No." She rolls her eyes. "Stay there."

"Oh." Eddie says. Sometimes he forgets that he has powers- living an entire life without them was much easier, and he's only known about them for almost three weeks. He's got them mostly under control now; Jim made sure to buy extra pillows and pillowcases, though, just in case. Eddie *has* accidentally set multiple things on fire. The couch has a black singe in it Eddie still hasn't stopped apologizing for- he had been sitting there, thinking of Derry, and then suddenly his arm was on fire. But it's been happened less. Sometimes he can even think of kissing Richie without a part of his body bursting into flames.

Eddie extends his hand towards the table and it slowly starts scraping across the floor, shaking a little but moving regardless. Once it's about halfway back to its original spot, he stops.

"What's wrong?"

"My head hurts."

"It's a *coffee table*."

Eddie huffs and starts moving it again, slightly smoother this time. Only for a moment, then he stops, and brings his finger to his nose. When he pulls back and looks, it's bloody. He looks to El, but she shrugs it off. Confused and more than a little concerned about him having an aneurysm or brain bleed or something, he finally completes moving the table and smiles with satisfaction.

And El moves it back to the other side of the room.

Eventually, Eddie moved the table from across the room six times, each time faster and smoother than the other. He was wearing short sleeves, so the back of his hand and wrist was covered in nose blood by the time he was done. But he also felt proud.

Though they just ate breakfast, Eleven smirked and dashed over to the fridge, pulling out some Eggos to toast so she can eat more. "You want?" She asks.

"Sure."

Eleven walks over to the toaster, but pauses before she does anything. Then she scrambled to the pantry and pulls out a pan. "Stick your hand out!" She smiles.

Eddie complies, and sticks his hand out. She walks over to him and rotates his hand so it's facing palm up, then places the pan on it. "Are you... trying to make me- a stove?! Eleven, I'm not a stove! Just use the actual stove!"

"No! You're a stove now."

"I'm- I am *not*! Stop- stop *objectifying* me!"

Eleven grins, chuckling and looking at him like he's a crack smoking hobo. "Stove! Stove!" She starts teasing.

"I will *hit you with this pan!*"

"No, you won't!"

13. 13

Eddie grips the phone in his hand tightly. This had been the first time he's been truly alone for a while, which meant only one thing: it's time to call the Losers. Or, at least, a Loser. He didn't want to do it with El or Hopper around.

Now he's all settled, and they're not here. Slowly, he presses Bill's number into the phone and brings it to his ear. He wonders if he'll be mad- it's been a month, and this is Eddie's first time calling. It was up to him to call first because he didn't know Hopper's phone number when he was leaving, so he wouldn't be able to tell them.

Eddie doesn't have enough time to worry, because Bill picks up. "H-hello?" He hears from the phone softly. Eddie closes his eyes, willing himself into the Void. He wants to see his friend.

"Bill. It's Eddie." He says.

The black materializes around him, and so does Bill and his phone in his kitchen. He watches Bill's face light up and reach out to grab something next to him. By the time his hand connects to the person, the dust-like haze had formed itself to be Richie, leaning on the counter. "Eddie! Hi!" He says, looking at Richie with wide eyes. Richie's eyes grow ten times larger than they already are behind his glasses.

"How are you? I'm sorry it's been so long. It's been... strange." Eddie asks. He can't feel the phone pressed to his ear or see it, but he stays in one spot because he knows it's there, and he'd drop it if he moved.

"I'm g-great! We're all great. We miss yuh-y-y-you!"

"I miss you, too." Eddie smiles. "How's Richie?" He asks, looking to the aforementioned boy who is staring at the phone in Bill's hand in wonder.

"Actually, Ruh-Richie is-" Bill turns to Richie, about to say something, when Richie vigorously starts shaking his head 'no'. "Great, too." Bill finishes slightly awkwardly. "Yeah. He won't admit it, but I think he's

started to tolerate birdwatching with Stan. He might even *like it*."

"Is he with you?" Eddie asks, even though he knows the answer. He's *staring* at Richie and Bill together, and he *watched* Richie tell Bill he didn't want to talk to him. What the fuck?

"No." Bill says decisively. Then, he brings his finger to his lips to show Richie he needs to be quiet.

Eddie's heart sinks. "Yes, he is." He says, confused. "He is. Why are you lying to me?"

"Eddie, I'm n-not lying to you." Bill says this with a laugh, as if what Eddie is suggesting is absurd.

"You are!" Eddie argues. He watches Bill and Richie interact silently, and it's obvious that Richie can hear Eddie over the phone due to how freaked out he looks. He has his hands up and he's mouthing 'What the fuck?!'.

"He's not here! I would t-tell you, Eddie. Y-you know that."

"No, you're lying to me." Eddie swallows and tenses his jaw. "He's standing right next to you, in your kitchen, and he's wearing a green shirt with white flowers and black shorts. The left lense in his glasses is cracked. You're lying to me."

Richie freezes. Bill tenses and says nothing, his head snapping to look where Eddie knows his window would be if he were actually in Bill's house.

Slowly, Richie turns to face Eddie, as if he knows where he is. But he looks straight through him.

"I have to go." Eddie says quietly.

"I do, t-too. Bye, Eddie. I'll tell the uh-uh-others you called."

Eddie pulls himself out of the Void and hangs up the phone.

Eddie didn't know how long he sat on the couch (and cried) and pondered about why Richie didn't want to talk to him. Maybe he

hates Eddie for leaving him. Maybe he stopped loving him. Maybe he thinks Eddie is gross for kissing him. Maybe he hates him. Maybe Richie hates him.

Maybe Richie fucking hates him.

Max knocks on the door of El's house, expecting it just to open so she can let herself in to El's room. She's quite surprised to see Eddie, instead. "Uh, hey, Eddie. Is El here?" Max asks, looking past Eddie and into the house. Her red hair is half up half down, and her shirt is striped. She's worn it before- a light blue background with yellow and a few darker blue stripes.

"No. She went out with Hopper, but you can come in." Eddie replies, looking her over.

"Sure!" Max smiles and steps once invited, setting down a large red bag down on the floor next to the door. She places her hands on her hips and tilts to one side, cracking her back, then the other.

"You're supposed to be sleeping over?" He asks, glancing towards the bag and shutting the door behind her without his hands.

Max shakes her head. When they told Eddie the story of Everything, they had left a few facts out. Personal things that Max and the others didn't feel comfortable sharing with someone they just met, but nothing vital to the story. To Eddie, Billy and Heather were both normal lifeguards. Bob Newby was never mentioned. Neither was Sara.

The truth is, this isn't a scheduled sleepover. Max had been refraining from going over to El's house for sleepovers like she did before Eddie got there and things at home got too bad, but today was too much. Neil was screaming at her mom again, and though he hadn't hit her yet, he had grabbed her wrist especially hard- Max wouldn't be surprised to see bruises the following day when she returns home. She had left the house once Neil calmed down, wanting to make sure that if he did try to hurt her mom, she could be there to at least try to help. He had stormed out to go buy cigarettes and Max subsequently

told her mother that she'd be going to Jane's for the night. She couldn't handle it. And Eddie's been here over a month, officially-they're friends now. She may not go around whispering to him all of her secrets, but he's certainly proved himself worthy of trust. And plus, it's not like he would ever put himself in a situation where he would ostracize himself from the group. She knew if Eddie ever did something to hurt Max, the others wouldn't forgive him. El would, but that's different. They have a weird super-twin bond. They can probably read each others minds.

"No. Not really. Just crashing." She answers, walking over to the freezer. There's chocolate Weight Watchers popsicles that Hopper says is the one of the foods she's not allowed to eat. He actually had to discuss this with her, since she made a habit of coming over and eating food, which was why the fridge was always stocked with Dr. Pepper and none of the gross new Coke crap that Lucas adores. She takes one popsicle out and unwraps it. Looking to Eddie, he still seems a little confused, but he doesn't seem to mind Max's presence. She flings herself down across the couch. "My mom and stepdad fight. I come here." She explains quickly, not wanting to wait for him to ask. Hopefully he'll just leave it there.

"Oh... I'm sorry."

Max sighs, licking the bar again. "It's... whatever. I just come here when it gets bad, but I didn't want to intrude with whatever weird super-twin shit you and El do. Now I've decided it's been long enough."

"We don't do- what *'weird twin shit'* do you think we do?"

"I dunno. Throw tables at each other with your minds?"

Eddie's about to protest- Max can tell because he opens his mouth-but he stops short.

"You've actually thrown tables at each other?" She laughs upon seeing his reaction. She can actually see him reliving the memory on his facial expressions.

He smiles and shakes his head. "We knocked over the bookshelf. It

sucked to clean up, and- that's besides the point! It's not that weird!"

Max sits up and crinkles her nose. "It's pretty, weird, Shorts." She says. Honestly, she'd been hoping to derail the conversation away from her mom and stepdad. It's working swimmingly.

"Is that catching on?" Eddie asks. The nickname, in fact, was catching on. Will sometimes was teased by the others about his shorts, but Eddie was something new. A different flipping species. A whole inch shorter shorts? Max doesn't even think she has shorts like that, and she's a girl.

Robin and Steve started a job at Family Videos a while ago, which meant that everyone in the Party and the extended members went in there to get discounted items. Technically, there was no family and friends discount, but Robin and Steve pretended like there was. If nobody sees you take it, it's free! This was when Robin had told them about how she teased Eddie in the living room of the Byer's house, and urged everyone to call him 'Shorts'. Nobody but Max agreed, which she thought was stupid, because the name was pretty funny. "Yup. Lucas and I went to Family Video and Robin told us *all* about it." She teases.

Eddie's face falls. "What?"

"About... your shorts?" Max offers, raising an eyebrow.

Instantly, Eddie's face fills with relief. "Oh. Right. Yeah. My shorts." He waits for a second, looking like he's going to say something.

"What?" Max asks, then wishes she hadn't.

"Are you okay? Your... parents."

Max eyes widen. "Of course I'm okay! I'm fine. And Neil isn't my parent. He's just... Neil." She frowns, then licks her knuckle because some of the ice cream had started to melt and drip down her hand. "He just gets a little stupid sometimes. I don't like it." She scans Eddie's face, and something melts away inside her like her icecream. "And, you know, *obviously*, it's been worse since Billy died." She adds, because it was something she would say to one of her friends.

"Why would a lifeguard dying affect him?"

Max's spine straightens instantly and her eyes widen as she realizes what she's said. Shit. She forgets he doesn't know, sometimes. "I mean- I-" Then she sighs, deflating a little. "Billy was my step-brother. Not just some rando." She admits. "We weren't close at all but... he took care of me, in his own way. Even if it was a shit way." She looks to the floor on the right side of her, not wanting to catch Eddie's eyes. She hates being vulnerable like this. Especially to people she doesn't really know.

She feels Eddie hug her, and she lets him. He's a good hugger, she decides. That's another thing he has in common with El.

Notes for the Chapter:

pretty sure this is the longest chapter of the book
whoops

14. 14

By the time El would be home with Hopper, Eddie's nails would already be painted black and Max will be finishing getting his winged eyeliner just right.

While she works, Eddie tells her stories about Derry. The stories tend to revolve around a girl who he says she reminds him of- a fiery redhead named Beverly who, if she grew out her hair and started skateboarding, would be the same person as Max. He doesn't go into detail, but he also explains that her home life was rough but improving.

Max starts painting his second hand when he begins talking about the quarry. "I haven't seen the quarry here yet, but Mike and Dustin told me it's high enough that you would die if you jumped. Our quarry was a lot lower, so we went there all the time. The first time we went, it was everyone there minus Mikey, and everyone was to scared to go first. Then Bev came from behind us and just dashed off the cliff like a fucking bull! It was- Max, it was insane. It was dangerous, too, since she didn't even look first. Oh my god- *what if- what if we were just staring at a bunch of rocks and she just jumped onto a bunch of rocks?* That was stupid of her. Stupid! I have to talk to her about that next time I see her." Eddie rants. Somewhere along there, he had lifted his hand as he so often does when he starts rambling, so there was a line of polish going down his finger from where he had tugged it away and the brush had painted his skin.

Max chuckled and tugged his hand back towards her, putting some nail polish remover on a Q-tip and starting to brush the mess off him. He sighs and keeps talking about how much he admires Bev, which then launches him into a whole discussion about how much he misses all his friends from back in Derry and wonders when he's going to see them again. He hopes he won't have to wait too long.

He has to stop talking when Max gets to eyeliner so she doesn't mess up, and when she finishes the second wing, El and Hopper come in through the door with groceries.

"I got the frozen pizza you like, kid!" Hopper says, closing the door with his foot as Eleven places down two bags of groceries with her hands on the table, a third one hanging mid-air behind her and eventually making it's way to the same place. Hopper is holding nothing.

However, the second the door had opened, Eddie had bolted to the bathroom, swearing quietly.

"He made you do all the work?" Max asks.

"Woman power. I offered to do it." Eleven shrugs.

Max pumps her fist, still clutching the eyeliner. "Female empowerment." She agrees.

In the bathroom, Eddie continues cursing, running the sink and desperately rubbing at his eyes and nails. The eyeliner was all smudged around his eyes now, and the wet-but-slightly-dry nail polish was goopy, so when he rubbed it off his nails were tinted black, some stuck like a frame to his nails, and a thin layer coated on the fingertip he was rubbing with. He curses some more when knocks come from the door.

"Eddie? You okay?" Hopper asks tentatively.

"Y-eah! Fine." He begins the search around the bathroom to see if there's any makeup remover or nail polish remover, until he remembers it's all in his and Eleven's room. He swears again.

"Well, I can hear you cursing."

"Sorry."

"That's not what I mean. What's going on in there?" Hopper continues. His voice is muffled through the door, but it's the only noise he hears, which means the other two are silent. "I can just have Eleven unlock it."

"I'm- using the toilet!"

"The sink is running."

Fuck. "Fuck."

"Eddie?" Then there's a sigh. "Max was doing your nails. Is that it?"

"It's-" Eddie huffs. "Yes."

"Come on, Eddie. That doesn't... *matter*." There's two soft knocks on the door. "Open up."

Hesitantly, Eddie unlocks the door, slightly embarrassed of the rings around his eyes and nails. It's gently pushed open as Eddie continues rubbing at his face so that at least some of his racoon-eyes were gone. It sort of worked.

"Kid, you don't have to hide things from me. I'm not a big scary cop you're stuck with. I'm here to take care of you, just like I take care of El, okay?"

Eddie looks the man over. He has a sort of smile, but his message seems sincere. Living with Hopper has been entirely strange for Eddie. His entire parenting style is almost the polar opposite of Sonia's- he *trusts* Eddie to know right from wrong, and he's completely aware of the fact that Eddie is strong- and stronger than him-, which is something Eddie's not used to. The people he knows in Hawkins all see him holding an unconceivable power. They look at him like he's strong.

Even Richie, to some degree, had thought he was delicate. But that's only because Eddie let him- when they see each other again, he'll make sure that Richie knows he isn't some weak little kid with a high-pitched voice. He can be a strong little kid with a high-pitched voice just as well. "Bev did it once and Sonia was mad. Really mad. I... wasn't allowed to leave the house or see any of my friends for a week."

El- standing a few feet behind Hopper with Max- furrows her eyebrows. "A week?"

"That's... extreme." Max finishes.

"She had Munchausen by proxy." Eddie explains, but neither of them seem to understand what the words mean. "She convinced me I was

sick? I had a fake asthma medication I thought was real for most of my life, and a bunch of other placebo pills, and the one suppressant pill for all this. But the rest did nothing, and none of them did what I thought they did. I couldn't do sports in school or play with the other kids or anything, Stuff like this," He motions to the makeup resting on his face. "freaked her out."

"That's horrible." Max mutters, crossing her arms.

"You don't have to worry about that here, Eddie." Hopper says. "Just don't... get anyone pregnant."

Eddie laughs. "I definitely won't."

Notes for the Chapter:

fun fact this story isn't even halfway over

15. 15

Eddie helps Hopper cook. This was something El was learning to do, but her addition to everything could be seen as a detriment rather than an improvement to the overall quality of the meal. Eddie, however, knows what he's doing to some extent.

And sometimes he is a stove.

The sad fact is, it's totally cheaper to have a fire wielding teenager stick his hand out to cook your food than to pay more on a bill on gas; though Hopper wasn't exactly struggling, the extra money was nice, especially since he had another kid to take care of.

Luckily, Eddie's abilities go beyond being a piece of kitchenware. He knows how to make food other than Eggos and Ellios thanks to Sonia insisting that food she cooks will be healthier than any processed shit, while she ate the aforementioned 'processed shit' constantly as she sat on an old reclining chair and watched TV.

Currently, Eddie and Hopper were making dinner together, and El was sitting on the couch reading magazines with her knees tucked to her chest, occasionally calling Eddie over to answer a question on one of the quizzes for her about how her friends would describe her. By the time Eddie and Hopper created average-tasting chicken and asparagus, El had managed to set the table.

Recently, there was an added addition to the house: a chair matching the other two set at the table. Previously, it had been a folded plastic chair thrown there for convenience. Now it felt like... Eddie wasn't just tossed there. More like gently placed.

They all sit down to eat. Soon, there's a conversation between the three about what happened at school that day.

"Lucas and Max broke up again." El mentions.

Eddie laughs. "Again?" He asks. "I give it three days."

"I give it one." El counters.

The conversation continues on with Hopper occasionally adding something or laughing and whatever the other two said. After a little while, he clears his throat.

"Joyce and I are thinking about going away this weekend." He says. "Not that far. About two hours out. There's a cool mini golf place and a museum Joyce wants to see, though I can't tell you how good it will be. I don't really get the rave behind museums but..." He shrugs. "Meh. Couldn't hurt."

El presses her lips together. "You'll be gone... the whole weekend?"

"Well, we can not go. If you want. I know I've never really done this before."

"I think you should go." Eddie supplies, stabbing some chicken with his fork. "El and I will be good here together, right?"

"Right." El nods.

The rest of the week was just a countdown to Friday, when Hopper and Joyce would be leaving. The group had already made plans to meet up at El's house- at first they considered Will's, but then Jonathon told them that there was no way he was watching them all. However, by the time Thursday rolled around, it became apparent that Nancy and Jonathon were planning some getaway of their own, so Will's house was selected to be the dedicated hangout.

Outside of school on Friday, they all met up in the front. Lucas, Mike, and Max had to stop back at their houses to get their sleepover bags, but Dustin had the bright idea of already bringing his to school. It received some odd looks, but it was Dustin- he doesn't care much. Ever since the whole defeating Russian commies debacle, he seemed to crack his shell. Something like showing up to school in Ghostbuster costumes wouldn't bother him anymore. Not when he saved America and the rest of the world, too.

Dustin and Will went off together back to the latter's house while everyone else rushed home to get their bags. Eddie and El raced on

the way there- Eddie won, only because El isn't so good on a bike yet. She still has training wheels and she gets teased for it sometimes. But she's learning. They quickly stuff bags with pajamas, clothes for the morning, hairbrushes, toothbrushes, and whatever they deemed necessary.

"Maybe a fire extinguisher." El suggests thoughtfully, which gets her a glaring Eddie telling her to shut up even though he's smiling.

Hopper came into their room a few moments later. "I'm heading out now. Are you guys okay?" He asks, a suitcase gripped in his hand. He's wearing a short-sleeved green button up that Eddie thinks looks nice in comparison to the old pajamas he wears or the uniform he so frequently adorns.

"We're good. We're going to Will's."

"Stay out of trouble, got it?" Hopper raises his eyebrows and points a finger at Eddie. "You, too, young man. I don't want to hear about any rule breaking from Jonathon."

Eddie smiles. "You won't." This doesn't exclusively mean Eddie won't cause trouble- he just knows Hopper won't hear about any of it, because Jonathon is going to be making some trouble of his own.

"Alright." Hopper nods. "I'll see you."

"Bye, Dad." El steps forward to him and wraps her arm around him. He laughs and hugs her back while Eddie inches closer- he doesn't exactly want to *hug* Hopper, but he does want to be polite and say bye.

"Bye, Jim." Eddie says quietly, unsure of why. After living with his twin sister for nearly two months, he can proudly say that he sees her as family. He's *seen* her as family since he first got here, but now he truly feels comfortable. He actually burped in front of her one time and didn't even say excuse me or *anything*.

"Bye, kid. And... you don't have to call me Jim." Hopper reaches out and ruffles Eddie's hair, which he doesn't appreciate but at the same time does, because the action is almost parental. Which is an odd

feeling for Eddie. One he decides to ignore. They exchange a few more words and Hopper tells them not to throw any parties, and then he's on his way.

Notes for the Chapter:

parents are out of town!! any predictions on what fun is going to happen?? ;)

16. 16

Notes for the Chapter:

yes i posted twice in a day. i'm very excited

By the time they get to Will's house, everyone else is already there and set up in the living room. Jonathon and Nancy are in his bedroom, but they plan to leave in about an hour once they're sure Hopper and Joyce had cleared out; the door is closed and locked and nobody tries to open it.

Will decides to go to the kitchen to get snacks, so Eddie goes with him. He walks up to the refrigerator, about to open it, when his eyes land a drawing of a man with a Superman cape, seemingly named 'Bob Newby' according to the text below. For some reason, the man and the name feel familiar.

"Who's this?" Eddie asks, sticking his thumb at it.

Will turns- he was going through a cabinet on the other side of the kitchen- to see what Eddie was talking about. He frowns. "Oh. A guy my mom used to date." He says dismissively.

"Why does your mom have a drawing of her ex?" Eddie asks. "The art's good, but you'd think that she would take it down."

Will shakes his head, pulling two boxes of cereal down that he probably plans to eat by the handful. "No, it's not like that." He says, setting them down on the table. "They didn't break up. He... He died. Demodogs."

"Oh." Eddie replies quietly. "I didn't mean-"

"I know." Will smiles sadly. "He and my mom were really in love. They planned to move us in together because his parents were selling his childhood home. In, uh, Maine, actually."

Eddie looks to the picture again, and the reason why he's so familiar hits him. "John and Susan Newby." He says. "They lived down the street from Stan. They were selling their house a while ago, but they

took it off the market. We never knew why."

Will's face lights up. "Really? When was the last time you saw them? Are they- okay?"

Eddie shares a smile with Will. "They are. I played a game of chess with John not too long ago, but he won by a long shot. He looks a lot like Bob."

"My mom is gonna be so happy to hear that. We only met them once. At the funeral. Didn't exactly exchange phone numbers."

"Joyce was in Derry?"

"No. It was here." Will steps closer to the drawing, looking at it fondly. "He was a good guy. A really good guy. He always tried to help me- gave me some advice, even if it didn't work out. He said he had dreams about a clown, and it only went away when he was brave enough to stand his ground and tell it to. I tried that with the Mind Flayer. Didn't work, obviously. It's the thought that counts. He meant well."

"A clown?" Eddie asks slowly. A clown that maybe, *maybe* hadn't been a dream? He finds himself staring at the drawing again, dread pooling in his insides and making his gut twist.

"Yeah. Kind of silly, when you think about it." Will catches the look on Eddie's face. "Are you scared of them?"

Eddie pulls his eyes off the picture to look at Will. "Terrified."

"Okay, remember that time we stole a bunch of fireworks from a store? Er- sorry, Eddie." Lucas asks, standing up while the rest of them are sitting down.

"I've done my own shoplifting." Eddie says. Then he sighs. "I don't like it. It's scary. And illegal. But Ben could have literally gotten *AIDS* from an open wound like that and-"

"Eddie."

"I'm serious! I know you don't want to hear it, but there is a *ton* of bacteria-"

"Eddie!" Lucas tries again. Eddie huffs and rolls his eyes, telling Lucas to continue. Lucas smiles and condescendingly thanks him, which makes El laugh. "I decided to shoplift more fireworks." He finally announces.

"You *what*?" Mike asks.

"I have more! I paid for some, but we've already established it's hard to buy things with only \$3.50, so I had to make due. No need to thank me."

Will scoffs. "What if you got caught?"

"What are the police gonna do? Arrest me?"

"Yes!"

"The chief is the parent of two of the most powerful people on the planet, who happen to both be my friend! He's not going to arrest me!"

The group settles, because Lucas made a fair point. Really, as long as none of them kill anybody, there's no way they're going to get in trouble. Not in a small place like Hawkins where the government avoids really looking over. Or at least pretends to.

Eddie, however, is silenced for a different reason.

"The parent'.

Eddie honestly doesn't know where he and Hopper stand- he's only just recently realized he's started calling him Hopper in his head and not Jim. Hopper is certainly a *parental* figure to Eddie, but a parent? That's such a big role, and he doesn't even think that Hopper wants to *keep him*. After all, the agreement was temporary. Eddie was to be taken in temporarily, until he could find a home to stay at.

Except he has one, doesn't he? He has a bed and a chair and friends and a school.

He's got a sister who he *knows* loves him, and he knows he loves her, too.

It doesn't seem like he has to leave.

He doesn't want to, either.

Notes for the Chapter:

fun fact! i was going to split this fic into two books
and end the first one here but i decided not to cuz i
don't feel like it!
another fun fact!
buckle up!

17. 17

The night ended in Will's backyard. Eddie had lit about a quarter of the fireworks, they all watched them pop and kiss and burn the sky, then they all found somewhere to crash. Will and Mike took Will's bed, Dustin slept in a sleeping bag on the floor next to them, Max and Lucas took Jonathon's (nothing happened, though they were teased about it), and Eddie and El took the living room; El ended up on the couch, and Eddie was on the floor in a sleeping bag.

In Derry, all the Losers would be in the same room- usually Bill's living room, since it was big enough to fit them all on the floor in sleeping bags. Those nights were fun. In fact, they almost had Eddie missing his friends.

For some reason, he couldn't turn his brain off.

He just kept thinking about Derry and Derry and Derry and Derry, like someone was screaming at him.

Warning him.

derry. derry. derry.

derry derry derry

Derry Derry Derry

DERRY DERRY DERRY

DERRYDERRYDERRYDERRYDERRYDERRY

Eddie shuts his eyes and thinks of Beverly, listening to El and her snores.

It only takes a moment for him to see her, sitting at the table that he recognizes from her kitchen. She's eating from a bowl of grapes and reading a book. She looks happy. Peaceful.

Ben is next. Asleep, which is understandable since it's the middle of the night. He checks Mike, and he's asleep, too.

Next, he decides on Stanley.

When he comes into vision, he sees Stan rapidly knocking on Bill's door, his chest heaving and sweat on his forehead like he just ran there. He continues pounding the door until it is thrown open by Bill, tired and confused.

"What are you duh-doing? You almost woke my p-parents up." Bill says, then looks over Stan. "Wh-wuh-wuh-what's wrong?"

"It." Stan pants. "I saw It."

For a moment, Bill looks concerned, but the feeling is quickly wiped off his face and turns into a frown. "Stan, y-you were just i-imagining things." He sighs. He pulls Stan into a hug until his breathing is steady and he's calmed down. Once he does, Bill pulls back. "Come i-inside. You can s-s-s-stay over tonight."

Eddie pulls himself out of the Void, sitting straight up.

DERRYDERRYDERRYDERRYDERRYDERRYDERRYDERRYDERRYDER

"El, wake up!" He says, clamoring out of his sleeping bag by kicking it off himself. "El!" He hisses again, standing up and shaking her. "Ellie!"

She snaps awake with a gasp. "Eddie? What's wrong?" She asks, looking around for danger. Her chest is heaving as she pulls air into her lungs through her mouth, a panicked expression hardening her features.

"We have to go to Derry. Right now. Get up. Get the others. We have to go." He rambles, still shaking her as though she was asleep.

"Eddie-?"

"Right now!" He shouts. His voice cracks. He walks over to the light switch and flicks it on, ignoring El's confusion and protest. Something is wrong, and he can feel it in his bones, like a presence at the back of his brain, teasing him and laughing. He makes his rounds around

the house, waking everyone up. "Dustin! How fast can you call Steve? We need a ride to Derry!"

"Derry? Fucking *Derry Derry*? Seventeen hours away Derry?" Mike ask, starting to change his clothes into real ones rather than pajamas.

Everyone is significantly confused, yet listening to him. Dustin is on the phone and everyone else is getting dressed as quick as possible. Eddie respects the monster-fighting hustle they all have.

Once everyone is decent and Dustin confirms that Steve, albeit annoyed, agreed to come to Will's house to pick them up, Eddie drags them all outside to wait.

"I didn't tell him we're going to Derry, so he's gonna be pissed." Dustin explains. Everyone else is yelling at Eddie and asking him what's happening, but nobody is protesting.

"Just hold on, okay?!" Eddie shouts. "I don't feel like explaining it once and I definitely don't feel like explaining it twice, so can we *please* just wait until Steve gets here? Everyone just shut up!"

"So what do you want us to do while we stand here?" Lucas asks, with a slight bite to his words.

Eddie crosses his arms. "Pray Steve still has that bat with nails in his trunk."

Lucas mumbles something, then runs off and comes back a little while later with a duffle bag.

When Steve pulls up in front of the house, it had been after an over ten minute long period of silence. Nobody said a word until Steve rolled down the window, revealing Robin in the passenger seat; there's a click from the car, signaling the doors have been unlocked.

"Get in, children." Steve calls out. Lucas puts his duffle bag in the trunk, and the kids hurriedly cram themselves into the car, making for an uncomfortable fit.

"Why's Robin here?" Dustin asks. "Not that I'm upset, or anything."

"Fuck you, small child. *We* were having a sleepover that *you guys* so rudely interrupted. He painted my nails, see?" Robin says, turning around in the passengers seat, smiling brightly, and wagging her fingers at them. They're coated with a sloppy bright blue that she seems to enjoy thoroughly.

"Why are those two nails shorter than the others?"

Robin chuckles. "Never change, Will."

"Ew, gross!" Mike says.

"I don't know what El sees in you." Lucas replies, and is met with a slap on the back of the head from Max.

Steve sighs loudly and rests his head back against the seat, shutting his eyes. "Okay. Where am I taking you to? Fast food? A party?" Steve asks. "Are you on any drugs or alcohol? You can tell me."

"You're taking us to Derry." Eddie answers.

Steve laughs. "No, I'm fucking not."

Mike frowns, leaning forward and gripping the seat in front of him. "Start driving, Steve." Then he looks over to Eddie. "And you better start talking."

Notes for the Chapter:

so... was anyone expecting this?

18. 18

Notes for the Chapter:

dialogue heavy chapters ahead!

"I'm not driving you to *fucking DERRY* unless you give me a good reason to!" Steve shouts, driving around along random roads whilst arguing with Eddie. "And there's no good reason! Literally not one!"

Eddie balls up his fists. He'd say he feels like he's so angry he's on fire, but he knows what actually being on fire feels like, and this isn't it. This is hotter. This is more like a billion tiny bites along his kin, nipping him raw. "Because there's a fucking Gate! There's a Gate in Derry!" He shouts back.

The car stops short, and everyone lurches forward in their seats. Every pair of eyeballs stare at him, wondering if they just heard him correctly- that they had told him their biggest shared secret, while he has a whole other side of him that he never revealed. "*What?*" Mike hisses. El's hand rests in the hair on the side of her head, gripping her head like it would help her make sense of the situation.

"Did he just say that-"

"There's a Gate in Derry. We thought we closed it for the next twenty-seven years, but it's open. I can feel it." Eddie wraps his arms around himself. "I'm so sorry."

"A Gate?" El asks breathlessly. "Like, a Gate gate?"

"Yes," Eddie admits guiltily, a knot forming in his stomach. He should have told them- now they're all blindsided, and he looks like an *asshole* "Except there's a different monster. There's no Demogorgon or Mind Flayer. It's something... different."

"Holy shit. Holy shit! Ho-ly SHIT!" Dustin rambles. "It never ends! Son of a bitch, it never fucking ends, does it?"

"Different *how*?" Mike presses.

"It's a- it's a shapeshifter." Eddie says, swallowing. The images of a noseless leper flash in his mind, so he has to take a breath. Richie, hitting the ground after Pennywise had thrown him, Bill telling them to leave him to die in the sewers, the coppery smell of blood that filled Bev's bathroom, and wondering where It got the blood from. He represses a gag. "...But it's more common form is a clown. It eats children. And- and it can transform into *your worst fear*, and the Gate is in a *dirty fucking sewer*, and me and my friends *thought* we killed it but we were *wrong*!"

The car starts moving on it's way to Derry.

"Eddie, why didn't you tell me this?" El asks, her face a mixture between concern and anger. "Friends don't keep secrets. *Siblings* don't keep secrets!" She curls up her balls into fists. "I *trusted* you! You do not trust me?"

"Of course I trust you, Ellie-"

"Friends don't lie!"

"I'm not lying!"

"Then why didn't you tell me? I told you everything!"

"Because I'm scared!" Eddie finally shouts, his breath hitching. He's going to cry- he can feel the familiar stinging in his nose and behind his eyes. "I'm so, so scared. I just wanted it to be over!" Eddie drops his face into his hands, takes a deep breath, then brings himself back up. "Fuck. Fuck. Fuck!"

Everyone in the car and Eddie was aware he had some explaining to do, but the car ride was silent for a while. Robin went to sleep so when Steve got tired she could drive, as they didn't plan on stopping at a motel for the night. This was going to be a straight ride to Derry, and then they were going to kill a monster. Another one.

"So..." Dustin says after almost an hour of silence. Max had fallen asleep on Lucas' shoulder, and he had fallen asleep leaning on her head. Mike was leaning against his seatbelt and drooling, leaving Will

to practically be laying in him, the side of his face pressed against the side of Mike's arm. "This... *clown*. What did you call it?"

"It."

"Yeah, the clown."

"No, we called it It."

Dustin blinks at him. "That's so unnecessarily confusing." They accidentally had woken Will, who was raising from his relaxed position to sit up.

"Okay, well, at least we didn't name it after a D&D character." Eddie teases. "And plus, 'It' is capitalized..." He grumbles.

"So, you killed It without using your powers?" Will asks, his voice a little rough from sleep. Eddie apologizes for waking him, but he doesn't mind.

"Yeah. Richie had a bat, Stan had a pipe, Bev had a poker, Mike had a bolt gun. We beat the shit out of It. I kicked It in the face."

"It. The clown?" Will asks, scanning Eddie's face. Eddie feels Will's gaze over him, asking him a question far beyond what his words expressed.

Eddie nods his head. *Yes. Exactly what you think it is.* "It only went away when we were brave enough to make it."

Will sinks on himself a little, the words resonating with him, thinking of Bob. Dustin doesn't notice the tension that just passed, so he immediately starts talking again. "That's so cool. We'd be dead without El. Like, so dead. How'd you do it?"

Eddie looks around the car. El is awake and next to him, but staring out the window entirely silent. "I'm gonna wait until everyone gets up- I don't feel like saying the story twice. It's not-" Eddie curls his arms around himself a little tighter. "It's not a happy one."

Eddie takes a deep breath. As soon as everyone had woken up- even Robin, though Steve argued she should sleep some more- Dustin had started harping him on telling them the story of It.

So, reluctantly, but knowing it's necessary, Eddie did.

He told them about Bill's baby brother who didn't get hit by a car. He told them about the Barrens, and Hockstetter, about horrible parents and quarries, about a leper with no nose that was going to infect him. He told them about projectors, about Niebolt, about breaking his arm. About the clown being right in front of him. About being sure he would die.

He told them his very own Everything. They fight, Beverly goes missing, they get back together, they kill the clown. They make a blood oath.

Eddie shows them his scar. "Beverly moved in with her aunt, and she found out that Bill didn't write the poem a little later. She started dating Ben." He leaves out that he thinks Mike and Stan have a thing now, and he leaves out that he and Richie *definitely* have a thing now. "And then Sonia... yeah, then I came here. That's the story." He says, running his thumb along the white line across his palm.

"You said..." El's voice trails off and she furrows her eyebrows together, distraught. "You said that you thought you closed it for the next twenty-seven years." She says. "Why?"

"Every twenty-seven years, It comes back. To feed."

"But it hasn't been twenty-seven years." Mike says.

"Oh, *really*, Captain Obvious?" Max teases.

"I think it was me." Eddie says, rubbing his forehead. "I think- that maybe, I opened the Gate when I started using my powers. I'm- El and I- we're connected to It, in some way."

"How long has this thing been around?" Steve asks, keeping his eyes on the road.

Eddie sighs and leans back in his seat.

"Forever."

Notes for the Chapter:

i'm so glad you guys are liking this!

19. 19

Notes for the Chapter:

arson

Eddie was in the Void for at least half of the trip. He would jump around, friend to friend, finding them all sleeping, bar Bill and Stan who were still up talking. One time he found Bev peeing in the bathroom, which was super awkward and he never plans on telling her that happened. Mostly, he stayed with Richie, just watching.

His room is still messy- Eddie can tell because, although there are no walls, all of Richie's furniture and strewn clothes are present. Richie looks peaceful as he sleeps, and it makes Eddie want to walk over to him and brush his hair back. Technically, he can. It's not like Richie can see or feel him, so what would be the harm in walking over there? Deciding to do it, he slowly walks over to Richie, and uses his hand to brush some of the hair falling into his eyes to the side. A small smile spreads across his face, hoping that Richie doesn't stir.

He snaps awake. Eddie jumps back.

The boy in bed looks frantically around, his hand pressed against where Eddie's fingers once were. "Eddie?" He asks, his eyes passing through him.

"Richie?" Eddie responds. He waves his hand in a swiping motion across Richie's face, but he doesn't react to it.

He clamors out of bed, looking around his room. "Eddie?" He calls out again, but clearly doesn't see or hear him.

Eddie steps towards him and grabs his shoulder. "*Richie.*"

Richie's hand immediately rises, grabbing the same shoulder Eddie is, causing him to let out a small gasp as the hand rests on his own instead of passing through. For a moment, it's as if Richie is staring into Eddie's eyes. Seeing him. "Eddie." He breaths out, his eyes starting to dart around the room, looking for him. It only lasts a

moment; Richie shakes his head and lets his hand drop, mumbling "Stupid..." and getting back into bed.

Eddie pulls out of the Void a moment later, wishing he could send Richie a sign. To let him know he's coming.

About five hours in to the drive, at almost 1:00 AM, Steve pulls up to a gas station. "Did anyone bring any money?" He asks, looking around. The rest of the group look at each other dumbly: the answer is no. "Shit." He says quietly. "I'm almost out of gas. And I'm hungry."

Eddie bites his lip. "Fill up the tank." He replies.

"And how are we going to pay for that, idiot?" Max asks.

"...We're *not*." Eddie opens the car door and lets himself out, deciding to enter the store that no doubt contains chips and snacks and candy for them all to reenergize with. "Fill up the tank. Mike, come with me."

Mike follows him out of the car and closes the door behind him as Steve exits on his own side, going to fill up the tank and looking skeptically at Eddie.

Together, he and Mike walk into the store, creating a chime from the bell above the door. A tired worker at the desk looks up at them from his magazine, then back down. "Grab what you want." Eddie offers.

Eddie had shoplifted once, but he doesn't know much about it. He knows that he needs a distraction, except he probably isn't what the man at the desk is looking for. Beverly is insanely pretty and Mr. Keene is insanely pervy, so they had gotten lucky.

Eddie may not be gorgeous like Beverly-

But he can set things on fire. Take that, Mrs. January Embers.

The first thing he does is find if there was a camera- there was, at the top right corner of the store. Eddie approaches the desk. He could try to break it, but the employee would most likely notice. However,

most cameras have an on and off switch, so this one probably does, too; if Eddie could use that to turn off the filming, then there would be no evidence that he's becoming becoming both an arsonist and a thief in the span of ten minutes. "Excuse me, sir." Eddie says as politely as possible.

The man looks up from his magazine again. "Yes?" Eddie looks frantically behind the desk for the button, going on his tippy toes and leaning over whilst trying to remain inconspicuous.

"Is there a bathroom here?" He asks, still looking. It's probably weird he's not maintaining eye contact, but he can't imagine the gas station attendant gets the most normal customers.

"Employees only." He responds gruffly, going back to reading. Eddie can see a grainy screen with the film coming from the camera, but no button- then he sees it, a small switch tucked behind the monitor. He focuses on it, then watches it turn itself off. The screen goes blank and Eddie smiles as it goes unnoticed. "You need anything?"

"Uh, no. Sorry." Eddie walks off to go find Mike in the small store. It only takes a few seconds- his arms are full of snacks and he's holding a case of Coke- all the old kind and none of the new kind. They all know the group (Lucas) is at a split of which is better, but it's pretty unanimous that Lucas is wrong and stupid. He smiles at Mike and starts to pick up some snacks of his own, including gummy bears that he knows Dustin likes that Mike didn't seem to be holding. "How are things with El?" He asks as casually as possible as he picks up some cheese doodles he's always wanted to try but was never allowed.

"Fine." Mike replies shortly. "How are we getting out of here with all this stuff?"

"Don't worry about it. So, you two are good?"

"Yeah. Why? Did she say something to you?"

"No... just making sure. You know. Because she's my sister and all."

Mike pauses and looks at Eddie with an eyebrow raised. "Are you going to threaten me?"

"No!" Eddie answers. His hands are filled with so filled snacks he would probably had dropped them if he hadn't been using his powers to keep some balanced. "But don't forget that I can set things on fire."

Mike laughs. "I won't."

Together, they approach the counter to 'pay' for their items- Mike is behind Eddie, whispering to him, asking what the fuck he's doing. Eddie hissed at him to shut the fuck up.

"Hey." Eddie greets the man, who huffs at having to looking up from his magazine and actually do his fucking job. "We'd like to-" The boy looks down an isle to his right. "Holy shit!" He shouts. "Your store's on fire!"

The man looks unimpressed, but still leans forward and slightly over the counter to look down the isle, and sure enough, Eddie had set a few packages of Twinkies on fire. The attendant's eyes go wide and he swears; as the Twinkies crackle, the man reaches down for something, then pops back up with a fire extinguisher and runs over to the fire.

"Go! Go!" Eddie whisper-yells. They run out holding back giggles, Eddie pulling open the car door with his powers so they both can launch themselves into the car, wrecked with laughter. Steve is sitting in the drivers seat, apparently done with filling up the tank. "Go!" Eddie repeats. He and Mike are basically draped over everyone else, laying sideways as the car peels away; they drop the food so it's scattered along the floor and the others.

"What did you two *do*?" Robin asks, fully turned around in her seat.

"He set the guy's snacks on fire and we ran!"

The group breaks off into multiple exclamations of *Holy shit!* and such.

The snacks are passed around to everyone, and for a moment, Eddie forgets that he's on his way to probably die.

Notes for the Chapter:

sorry for not updating the last two days! cooking for thanksgiving and actual thanksgiving and all of that :)

20. 20

Notes for the Chapter:

another double update! also, this chapter has weird formatting. don't fret- no future chapters are formatted like this.

edit: that awko taco moment when the next chapter is formatted like this but you forgot because you wrote it like two weeks ago... uhm yeah so the next one is formatted oddly too but that's the last one i PROMISE

It's 9:00 AM. Everyone is practically dead. Steve is asleep in the passengers seat, Robin is driving, and everyone else is either asleep or completely silent. They had been in the car for a whopping thirteen hours with minimal stopping, and nobody is having a good time anymore. They're all uncomfortable and stiff and sore and the whole thing is starting to feel less like a road trip and more like a death sentence.

Maybe it is.

9:00 AM. Approximately four hours until The Party arrives.

Bill and Stan had been up for a while, and they were eating breakfast when they were met with rapid knocking on the door.

"I'll get it." Bill offered, leaving Stan to his blueberry pancakes. He slides off his seat and goes to the front door, opening it to see who's outside. Immediately, he's met with Mike, clearly worried.

"Bill, man, you're not going to believe me but I think- I think I saw It. *It*, Bill. And so I went to Stan's house, but he's not there. He's not there! His parents don't know where he is and they said he'd be home soon, but what if It got him? I saw It, Bill, I know we thought we killed him, but you got to believe me." He rambles, his two fists

clenched and pressed together in front of him. "Bill, you believe me, right?"

"Stan is-"

"Here!" Bill hears from behind him, and suddenly Stan is next to him. "I was sleeping over here, Mike, I'm okay." Bill steps back as Mike barrels into Stanley to give him a hug, and watches as Mike tenses then pulls back.

"I still saw It." He says quietly. "I know that it's crazy-"

"I did, too." Stanley cuts him off. "That's why I'm here. I thought I was going insane."

10:00 AM. Approximately t hree hours until The Party arrives.

Bill had called Ben and Richie, telling them to come to his house immediately. Ben offered to call Beverly. The other three sit and wait for the others to arrive- Richie is first, followed by Ben. This is where they are now, sitting in a circle in Bill's living room.

"We can't start without Beverly. Where is she?"

"She didn't answer." Ben says. "Why? What's wrong?"

Bill, Mike, and Stan exchange a glance. "We need to go to her house. Now."

"I'm confused. What the fuck is going on? Are Ben and I supposed to just follow you with our lips attached to your butts?"

"Beep beep, Richie." Stan grumbles, standing up with Bill and Mike.

"It's It." Bill supplies. "We have to go make sure she's okay."

They're all out the door within the minute.

11:00 AM. Approximately t wo hours until The Party arrives.

"Beverly." Ben gasps, rushing forward to her. She's babbling and sobbing uncontrollably, only able to hug Ben when he reaches her

and not much else.

She's covered in blood. Head to toe. It's sticking to her and some is partially dried, so she's been like this for a while.

They all do their best to comfort her, but nobody other than Ben, who loves her too much to care, can touch her with more than a hand. Stanley can't even bring himself to that, instead opting to comfort her once he gets on gloves.

They start cleaning.

Eddie pulls out of the Void. "Remember when I told you guys Bev's bathroom was covered in blood?" He asks the silent car.

"No." Robin says. "I think I'm the only one awake."

Eddie looks around the car- she's right. "Well, it was covered in blood, but I told them it was just a nosebleed, except it wasn't a nosebleed. It was the whole bathroom, every inch. But only we could see the mess because it was one of It's tricks. We all got together and helped her clean it up." Eddie explains. "It did it again. Her whole bathroom." He finishes with a whisper.

"A little less than two hours until we're there, Shorts. Don't worry. How long did it take you all to clean the bathroom?"

"About two hours."

Robin moves the rearview mirror so she can see Eddie. She smiles at him comfortingly. "We'll be there soon. Before any trouble happens." Eddie nods. Robin taps a beat on the steering wheel. "Are we gonna see anyone special in Derry?" She asks.

"Hm?"

"You know. A special boy?"

"Oh." Eddie looks around the car, hesitant to speak, but they're all asleep. "Yeah. Richie."

"Ah, Richie." Robin wiggles her eyebrows. "What's he look like?"

Eddie furrows his eyebrows, pressing his lips together. "Kind of like Mike, actually. Except better than Mike."

Robin laughs. "So you and your sister have similar taste. Nice."

"Shut up." Eddie says without malice, smiling to himself.

Robin sighs. "Only because I want to. Not because you're telling me to."

After a bit, Robin pulls over and wakes up Steve, wanting to get a bit of sleep in before they get to their destination. Steve takes over and the car starts up again. "Next stop," He says. "Derry."

12:40 PM. Approximately twenty minutes until The Party arrives.

"Hold on." Richie says, just as Bill steps on the first step of Neibolt. The group turns to him expectantly.

"I don't care if y-you're scared. I'm going. With or wih-wih-without you." Bill responds, turning to face his friend.

"Can we just- wait a bit?"

"For what?" Stan asks.

"For..." Richie's voice trails off as he looks at the ground, avoiding eye contact with the rest of the Losers. He feels stupid for saying it, but there's something tugging inside him that tells him he has to. "For Eddie."

Notes for the Chapter:

fun fact: i finished writing the story. holy shit. it's done.

21. 21

Notes for the Chapter:

alright squad... the battle with pennywise is coming up, so i've changed the archive warning to make sure you're aware that graphic depictions of violence are on the way. i'm sure most of you guys assumed this and are okay with it because you're in the st/it fandom, but i just want to make sure that you guys know!

12:41 PM

"For Eddie?" Beverly repeats, her eyebrow shooting up. "Richie..."

"It sounds crazy. I know. But it's also crazy that this fucking demon clown is back and it's even crazier that this demon clown *exists*. I don't know how, but I know that we have to wait. Just a little longer. Please? Just fifteen minutes. That's it."

"S-Stan, what's the time?"

Stan lifts his wrist, checking the black watch he always has on. "Twelve forty-one." He responds.

Bill exhales, then sits on the step of Neibolt like it were an ordinary house and they were just waiting for their friend inside to come out. "Can you t-tell us when it's fifty-s-six?"

"Sure."

Bev, Richie, and Ben sit on the dead grass while Mike and Stan go to sit out on the street.

"HURRY THE FUCK UP, STEVE!" Eddie screeches, standing over the driver seat with his fingers digging in to the leather.

He had just seen in the Void that the Losers *were outside Neibolt*, and

he immediately pulled himself out and started shouting. They were close enough to Derry- about twenty minutes out- that Eddie recognized his surroundings and was able to start yelling directions to get to Neibolt. Everyone in the car was awake and shouting, too, and Steve was shouting back, telling them to shut up. Nobody listened, so Robin also joined in on the screaming, trying to get them all to listen to Steve.

12:56 PM

"It's time." Stan calls out to Bill from the street.

Richie sighs, feeling stupid. "I'm sorry, Bill. I don't know why-"

Bev places her hand on his shoulder. Her hair is still damp from the shower. "It's fine, Richie. You're just worried about him. But he's okay. He's far away, alright?"

"THEY'RE GOING INSIDE!"

"I'M NOT GOING TO SPEED MORE THAN AN EXTRA FIVE MILES AND PUT YOUR LIVES IN DANGER!"

"WE'RE GOING TO FIGHT A MONSTER! OUR LIVES ARE ALREADY IN DANGER!"

"SO YOU DON'T NEED TO BE IN ANY MORE! NOW SIT DOWN AND BUCKLE UP OR I SWEAR TO GOD I'LL STOP THIS CAR!"

"I WILL- I WILL SET YOU ON *FIRE*, *STEVE*!"

"BUCKLE! UP!"

"FINE!" Eddie screams launching himself backwards into his seat and buckling up. His heart is racing, pounding, slamming. He can hardly breath or think. He's buzzing with stress- he had seen them go inside Neibolt and he couldn't watch anything after that because he wouldn't be able to handle it if he had to watch them die and wasn't

able to do anything. Not even let them know he's on his way. He slams the metal part of the belt into the buckle and sits with his arms crossed against his chest, tapping his foot. He only speaks to hurriedly give Steve directions. His stomach knots and twists the closer he gets, whether it's from adrenaline or fear or whatever the fuck. He can't think clearly enough to decipher it, so he doesn't try.

"Down the street. Here! HERE!" He shouts, pointing at the abandoned house that is Neibolt. The second he looks at it, he is able to think with enough clarity that he is not scared- the only thing that matters is that his friends are safe. That Richie is safe. All the while, the rest of his friends are speaking over each other loudly, preparing for whatever is to come. The car slams to a stop in front of Neibolt. Eddie pulls at the car handle and slams his shoulder against the door to open in, but is only met with the impact of metal- the door does not budge. "Unlock it, you FUCKNUT!" He screeches, turning to face Steve. All he can see is orange and red- he's not sure if he's angry or if his eyes are *actually on fire*, but either way, the door clicks open with an apology from Steve. Eddie's vision comes back- his eyes were definitely on fire- and he quickly runs to the back of the car, demanding Steve opens the trunk. When it pops open, he tugs the bat with nails out of it.

Then he charges into the house.

He hardly processes walking inside or the ache in his legs from not walking for so long. All he processes is the screams. The screams of Beverly, Mike, Ben, Bill, and Stan.

And loudest of all: Richie.

It doesn't take a genius to figure out they're upstairs. Eddie follows the noises at a run, knuckles white from gripping the bat so hard, teeth and jaw clenched, and consciously making sure he's not on fire so he doesn't freak out the Losers.

He dashes up the stairs, holding the bat up in preparation to bash it down at any time.

They sound closer. "*Eddie!*" He hears Richie call out, though he's nowhere to be seen.

He's only on the second floor, but he can tell they're all here too- he runs forward, down a hallway that he recognizes as the same he saw Betty Ripsom in with Bill and Richie. The door is closed. He gets closer. Kicks it in. It swings open.

Eddie sees Pennywise, mouth open, choking Richie with one arm and holding his head back by his hair with the other. The clown has what looks like nail marks running down his face and something sticking out of his stomach, impaling it. Richie is kicking his legs, but he's raised off the floor and not doing anything to help his situation. The other watch, helplessly unarmed.

Eddie doesn't take any more time.

He raises the bat and brings it down on It's head.

Notes for the Chapter:

i know that there's still ten more chapters left, but would you all be interested in a sequel? i'm constructing an idea for one and i think it would be interesting.

22. 22

Notes for the Chapter:

a lotttt of characters are here now, so there's a lot of dialogue :)

Feeling the bat hit the clown's head was disgusting; Eddie feels the crack of a skull, and he hears laughter, and he sees the blood pouring out. He sees It drop Richie, and he sees It leave whilst cackling.

"Eddie. Eddie." He hears, and he's pulled out of the trance he's in, staring at the spot where It once was, laughing manically like Eddie hadn't just turned his head into a flattened 'U' shape.

He looks at the source of the noise- Richie, desperately, on the floor after being dropped. Immediately, Eddie falls to his knees in front of him, letting the bat clamor to the ground. "I'm here." He says, wrapping his arm around Richie. Richie is hiccuping as he clings onto Eddie, holding fistfuls of his shirt.

"I knew you would come. I knew it. I *knew* it." Richie mumbles into the junction of his neck and shoulder. Soon, there are more arms around the pair, hugging them and saying Eddie's name, saying they missed him, asking if Richie's alright.

Everyone seems delighted by this new addition of Eddie, until Stanley quietly asks, "How?" He wasn't in the group hug, instead standing right next to all of them, staring at Eddie like he's foreign. Beverly, who was smiling at Eddie, falters at Stan's question. She looks to him expectantly, like everyone else. "How are you here? How did you know?" Stan continues.

"I just... did." Eddie answers lamely. He doesn't exactly want to explain Everything to them yet, and doing it in a musty, dirty house was certainly not the best place to do it.

Someone calls his name from downstairs. "Are you okay?" The voice continues calling, sounding scared. It's Eleven.

"Up here! Be careful!" Eddie shouts over his shoulder before refocusing his attention to Richie. The group disbanded from around the two, so Eddie has room to help him up. Soon enough, he hears footsteps coming up the stairs. Then seven more pairs of feet.

El appears at the doorway, stopping abruptly like she just ran there. "Hi." She says awkwardly as everyone turns to stare at her. "I'm Eleven."

"...Years old?" Richie asks. The Losers club share equal amounts of confusion. No one had time to put thought to how Eddie *literally* got there, yet.

"No." Eleven answers in a tone that tells Richie his question is stupid. "My name? It's... Eleven." She replies. She's met with blank stares. "Jane?" She offers. "I'm Jane. I'm Eddie's sister."

Six of the seven Losers jaw's drop, and they all break into excited greets, saying their names that Eleven already knows. In fact, she's pretty sure she already knows who is who. The redhead is clearly the only girl, so she's Beverly, Richie is the one with glasses, Ben is the chubby one, Mike is the one with dark skin, Stan is the one with a buttoned shirt and kippah, and Bill is the one in the flannel. She steps into the room, and soon the Party and company are up there, too.

Steve is first- he introduces himself as the babysitter. He's followed by Robin, who introduces herself as co-babysitter. The Party comes in behind them, pushing into the room to take a look at the Losers they all heard so much about.

Max waves first. "I'm Max. I've heard a lot about you guys." She smiles, then looks at Beverly. "I like you the most, so far."

Beverly lets out a laugh. The Party introduces themselves one by one, and the Losers nod and greet them back politely until they're done. They all seem vaguely uncomfortable and trying to hide it- they don't know these people, after all, but they must be okay if Eddie's so comfortable with them. Mike and Mike bond over the fact that they share a name, and Beverly and Max bond over the fact that they share a hair color, but that's where the chatting ends.

As soon as introductions are finished, Bill speaks up. "W-well, it w-was nice to meet you, b-b-but we can't j-just stand here. S-so we're g-gonna go, and y-you can all wait outside, I g-guess." He says, starting to make his way to the hallway.

"Woah. Woah, woah." Steve replies, crossing off the doorway with his arm before Bill can leave the room. "No. I'm now your babysitter, too. And there's no way you're going down there without me." He replies.

"You haven't f-fought this thing before. W-we have." Bill says. "G-get out of my way."

"You didn't do a very good job the first time." Wheeler points out, earning a glare from Bill.

Robin's lips quirk up into a half-smile. "We can help you guys."

Bill goes to push past Steve's arm, so Steve counters with a body block. "Eleven? A little help here?" He asks, looking to her expectantly.

She flicks her head to the side, and the door reacts by slamming shut behind him. Immediately, every Loser minus Eddie takes a shocked step back, all eyes snapping to her.

"Did you just do that?" Stan questions, looking at her with his eyes wide.

"Eddie doesn't go unless I go. *Nobody* goes unless *we* do." El responds. The statement was a fact. Eddie would not be going without her, just like how, if the situations were flipped, she would not go without Eddie. They protect each other. Simple as that.

"You just closed that door with your mind!" Stan answers himself.

"Eleven has super powers. She's like a pocket superhero. She's saved the world and stuff." Steve scoffs, as if the statement were obvious.

Bill looks at her skeptically, but it's Stan who speaks. "No! No way! We are not letting some telepathic stranger come with us! We don't even know them!" He gestures wildly to the Party.

"I know them." Eddie counters. "They can help."

"They have nothing to do with this. We shouldn't be putting strangers lives in danger." Ben argues, looking at the others with a worried expression.

Will was standing behind Max and Lucas with Mike, but now he pushes forward to the front so he can speak to Bill. "We're not useless. You're not the only people who fought monsters before. *We* have, *three times*. And we won three times. And there's no way we're letting Eddie go without us, so we're coming." Will counters.

"Oh, fuck." Richie groans. He's standing shoulder-to-shoulder with Eddie.

"Monsters run in the family, I guess." Ben jokes, trying to alleviate the tension within the room, but nobody laughs.

"Yeah, and superpowers do to." Steve says, which earns him shocked glances. He gives the Losers club a dirty look. "Eddie has super powers. They're twins. Keep up!"

"Steve!" Eddie hisses.

"Was it a *secret*?"

"No, but-"

"So then what's the problem?"

"I guess-"

"You have super powers? Since when?" Richie asks, puzzled.

"Since- since I got there? I don't know! They're just there!"

"That's sick."

"That's crazy!" Stan shouts. "Not in a cool way! That's deranged! That's- that's- how?- that's-"

"I'm sorry!" Lucas calls out, cutting the others off. "Don't we have a monster to kill? Or are we all going to keep arguing in this dirty room?"

Bill nods. "R-right. Then l-let's go."

Notes for the Chapter:

thank you all so much for the support im getting on this story! it literally makes my day :)

23. 23

Notes for the Chapter:

yes, it's a triple update. why? because you guys are really liking this story, so i might as well supply you :)

"Why *do* you stutter?"

"Max!" Eddie snaps at her. He had specifically told all of them as much as he could about the Losers, and instructed them all about questions they shouldn't ask and things they shouldn't say. For example, don't ask Beverly about her parents and don't ask Bill about his stutter. And don't ask about his brother, either, unless you want him to hate you. They group of fifteen minors were making their way downstairs in order to get to the well and down to the sewers. Lucas had briefly made a stop outside, insisting he needed to get something from the car, so they were all annoyed, on guard, and waiting for him in the front of the house. However, Pennywise had made no attempts at attack yet. It's either, weak, scared, or biding It's time.

"I was b-born with it." Bill answers. "And I a-a-already get enough sh-shuh-shit for it."

"Billy had a stutter, too, when he was younger, but he outgrew it." Max says thoughtfully, and Eddie slaps his forehead. If Bill asks who Billy is-

"Billy?" Bill asks.

"Oh. My brother." She glances to Eddie with wide eyes, hoping that Bill doesn't see her do it. She must have realized what she did wrong, because mentioning her dead brother who got eaten by a monster in front of Bill, who has also has a dead brother who got eaten by a monster, might not go over too well. Thankfully, though, Bill seems to drop it.

Lucas enters Neibolt again, holding the duffle bag he had packed in Steve's trunk- Eddie had forgotten about that.

"What's in there?" Mike Wheeler asks, looking expectantly at the bag like everyone else. Not even the Party knew what was in there- it had been too tense to talk as they waited for Steve at Will's house, and nobody remembered to ask about it in the car.

Lucas places the bag on the ground and sits next to it on his knees. He unzips it and starts pulling out the contents- first, a gun and bullets.

"Oh no." Ben says upon seeing it. At the same time, Stan swears.

"You brought a *gun*?" Steve asks, running his fingers through his hair.

"And the rest of our fireworks." Lucas says, pulling open the sides of the bag so everyone can see inside. "Don't look at me like I'm crazy! It worked for the Mind Flayer, didn't it? These things are cousins or some shit! It could work!"

Steve places his hips on his hands. "Fine. Alright. Whatever." He says, pressing his lips together and nodding to himself. "Okay. So, who can tell me exactly what we're dealing with? Eddie explained it, but..."

"I'm not good at talking about it." Eddie finishes, frowning.

The Losers club look at each other, seeing who will speak first. "You're gonna go down there, and you're going to see your worst fear, and all of us are going to see it, too." Mike Hanlon explains. He crosses his arms. "So if any of you are keeping a secret... be ready for it to come out."

"That's not concerning or anything." Dustin responds.

"I'm not joking." Hanlon continues. "It can turn into anything. Anyone. Dead or alive."

"It's never seen us before. It can't know anything about us." Wheeler replies.

"You think we just opened up our feelings to a murderous clown?"

Beverly asked.

"That's pretty fucking dumb, man." Richie adds, fixing his glasses. Eddie hits his shoulder.

Bev rolls her eyes, exasperated. "It just *knows*. So be prepared."

Bill leads them all- with Steve next to him, holding his trusty bat- to the cellar with the well. The floor creaks under the weight of everybody walking. El and Eddie are on the sides of the group, ready to use their powers if they need to. Mike Hanlon is at the back, holding Will's gun, while Will holds his bolt gun. Hanlon has good aim with guns, something he's been taught since he was little, so it was decided that he should be the one with the weapon. That left Will with a bolt gun, which was easy enough to use, and he already knew how to account for kickback.

They reach the well, and Bill starts looking around for the rope. "Sh-shit. Rope's not here." He says.

"I can lower you down." El offers. "How deep is it?"

"Not deep." Bill shakes his head. "We don't go all the way down."

"Not unless he pushes you." Dustin says to Bill with a cheesy smile, pointing to Hanlon. He promptly gets smacked in the arm by Lucas, who is standing next to him.

"How much do they know?" Hanlon asks, knowing exactly what Dustin is referring to. He isn't offended at all, and he might have even laughed had it not been the situation it is. However, being back in the place where he almost died and then almost killed someone didn't tickle his funny bone.

"Nothing too personal." Eddie answers, making sure to catch Beverly's eye. He would never expose their secrets. Except, although personal, not a lot of their memories were secret. Georgie, for example, the Party knew about. "But we're going to see it. So... they'll figure it out." He says with a frown.

"You can trust us. We won't tell anyone. Promise." El adds.

Eddie nods. "They're not much, but you can."

"Hey! What's that supposed to mean?" Dustin asks, his tone offended.

"It means shut up!" Max huffs. "I'm not sure if any of you just heard, but El totally just offered to make us fly. That's a pretty sweet deal."

"Down a well?" Ben asks.

"In a crackhouse?" Stan adds.

"Crack is only scary if you're a *pussy*!"

"Max, shut up! You've never even tried weed!"

"And you *have*, Will?"

"Have you *met* Jonathon and my mother?"

"You *what*?"

"Shut up!" Wheeler shouts out. "Shut up! Are you all stupid? You heard what Eddie said about It, right? And you're arguing right above where it lives about drugs? We are about to go down there and kill *another* monster. We actually might die. Can you shut up?"

Max and Will blink at him, and then Bill clears his throat. "J-Juh-J-Eleven, if you c-could lower me down?" He asks. "I'll tell you when to suh-suh-stop."

Stan stayed hooked to Hanlon's arm like he were expecting something to jump out at him the entire time. To be fair, everyone was- they were all in subgroups of two or three, with the exception of Bill leading the charge in the front. They make their way through the sewers with low whispers, the previous banter dwindling off into almost nothing. Steve tries to memorize where they are, but it doesn't take too long for him to forget if they made a right or left turn, so now he just follows Bill, clutching his bat, just in case.

They hadn't been down the well and in the sewers for even five

minutes, but it felt like a lifetime.

"Guys." Stan says, pausing his walking. He and Hanlon were lingering at the back of the group, so everyone stopped to turn and look at the two. "I don't like this. Why haven't we seen It yet?"

"Do you want to?" Wheeler asks.

"No. It's just... suspicious."

"Well, it hasn't been twenty-seven years." Beverly says.

Ben nods. "Yeah. It hasn't rested, and It didn't get enough food the cycle we fought It. That means It's weaker than It's ever been. Right?"

"Right." Stan agrees hesitantly, frowning. Hanlon turns to say something to him, but before the words can make it past his lips, there's a loud clang that reverberates around the room. Everyone freezes.

For a moment, all is quiet except for a faint dripping, but the muggy energy in the air becomes electrified, as if someone had set every particle in the room on fire.

Then there's a blur of motion from something about four feet tall, flying across the room from nowhere. It squawks, broken and garbled- you wouldn't need to look at it to know that it isn't normal. The beak is cracked and the junction where it meets its head is torn and bleeding. The brown, dirty feathers that encase it are falling off or bloodied, and there are parts of its body missing, showing exposed bone.

Stanley hardly has time to react before it sinks its feet into his shoulders, sharp like talons, and flap its decaying wings. He falls over. This time, he does scream. There's commotion all around him- people swearing, people backing away, people running forward.

"Shoot It! Shoot It, Mike!" Bev is screaming. She and Bill had started grabbing It, trying their best to tug It off Stan, who is either begging or crying or maybe praying. It's too loud to hear over everything. He's definitely screaming.

Hanlon fumbles with the gun, bringing it up to his shoulder and positioning at Stan and the bird-like creature. "I can't get a clear shot! I'd hit him!"

The bird lurches backwards an insane amount, like it were being lifted by Eddie or El, but they're only met with a cry of pain- the bird had sunk its talons into Stan's skin. Eddie swallows, unsure what to do- he could set it on fire, but what if it doesn't let go? What if it burns Stanley, too?

A war cry sounds out from the cluster of children as the bird continues squawking and pecking a thrashing Stanley. Dustin appears, barreling into the side of the monster. The unexpected angle and sudden movement seemed to shock the monster, because it releases the flesh it was gripping so tightly. Together, Dustin and the bird fall to the floor and slide. It starts gargling, and Dustin promptly scrambles away from it, careful not to get grabbed, heaving for air. Wheeler takes him by the arms and heaves him to his feet as the group of thirteen children- Mike is on the floor with Stan, still- back away from the twitching monster. It screams- a noise that should not come from a bird- and recedes into a tunnel, growling like it were a dog.

Immediately, the Losers club is surrounding Stan, kneeling by him, while the Party and company form a second, standing circle around them.

"I hate this- I shouldn't have come in here- why would I ever- we're going to die!"

"No, Stan-"

"Stan, we're going to be okay-"

"We're going to die!" Stan repeats, his voice cracking.

"Stan-"

"We were lucky enough to make it out of here alive and now we're back! What can't it just be over? Why is there always more?"

Eddie, who previously was squished behind Beverly and Richie and

looking over their shoulders, pushes his way through. He reaches his arm out to place it on Stan's knee, about to say something like *We love you* and *We won't let anything happen to you*, but he doesn't get the chance.

Instead, Stanley kicks at the floor to push himself away from Eddie before his hand can reach him. "Don't touch me!" Eddie jerks his hand back. "Don't touch me." Stan repeats, quietly this time. The mugginess in the air becomes more present again, like it's engulfing them. The dampness with the added silent shock of everyone made the sewer more oppressive than it already was.

"I'm sorry." Eddie says, shocked. What has he done wrong? He stands up, and soon the others follow him.

Steve sucks his teeth. "Which way we going, Bill?"

Bill shines his flashlight. "J-just through there."

Notes for the Chapter:

good news! i have written the synopsis for the sequel, so it's happening!! idk when it's going to be out, but i've started working on the first few chapters ;)

24. 24

Notes for the Chapter:

long chapter! warning, this chapter uses the f slur and homophobic language.

The Losers club had told the Party and company not to worry about being unarmed because of something they creatively named The Pile- a large pile Pennywise collected over thousands of years with items that belongs to kids, as well as other junk like the piece of pipe Stan had used last time. But the Party hadn't been expecting this: something so high it's seemingly never ending, with decaying bodies floating around.

"Holy shit." Dustin says.

Above the pit is a orange light in the ceiling, pulsing and glowing.

"That's it." El mutters, elbowing her twin. "The Gate."

"I- I don't think that was there before."

Eddie remembers seeing The Pile the first time he was down there. The sheer terror that had ripped through him, seeing bodies of little children floating around, unclaimed. He wants to lift his hand and take them down, but he doesn't. A small voice in his head says *Don't. You shouldn't.* And without any reason to believe it, he knows that this is true. This isn't El or him making things float.

It is the one responsible.

"Isn't It supposed to be here?" Robin asks, looking around. Her voice is shaking a little. "This fucking sucks." She continues.

"Just be ready." Bev says, lifting her weapon- a piece of the fence outside- up, next to her head. "We used to have one redhead, and now we have two, so it'll be fine. We'll be fine. Right, Max?" She jokes in the tense situation, and looks over to her counterpart, seeing if she would share the same smile. But it instantly drops off her face. "Where's Max?"

"What?" Lucas hisses, his eyes wide. He starts rotating to the right, and pauses once his eyes land on her. "Max!" He whisper-shouts. She's facing away from them, looking at something hidden behind a stream of water falling from above. He starts towards her, but Bill is already a few steps ahead.

The two branching off from the group causes them all to follow in a cluster, but keeping their distance upon seeing what's happening.

Lucas freezes and grabs Bill's arm, forcing him to stop, too.

"Billy?" Max asks quietly, the only other noise being the rushing water.

"Max." Something that looks like Billy replies, beginning to walk closer. "Max, you're here."

"You're not real." She shakes her head, taking a step back.

"I'm your brother. Of course, I'm real." He takes another step, and this time she doesn't move. "You're not happy to see me?"

"I-"

"You're not happy to see me?" He asks again, tears visibly gathering at the bottom of his eyes, ready to fall out with one blink. She doesn't reply, and nobody could see her face, but she makes a small whimper. "He got me, Max." He continues. His voice cracks a small bit, one tear releasing and slipping down his cheek. "He got me."

"I'm sorry." Max lets out, her voice sounding tight and forced.

"Why didn't you save me?" He asks, tilting his head to the side. A small flower of red begins to bloom on his chest, a pinprick visible through his shirt.

"I'm so sorry." Her voice cracks, and the blood stain grows in size.

"You could have saved me." Blood so dark it almost seems black.

"I tried so hard. I'm so sorry." She takes a step towards the figure of Billy, reaching out to him. "I love you, Billy."

Bill watches, his head swimming. He had stood where Max and the Not-Billy stood, and the little brother he loves so much had said the same things to him. He had looked at a face that was just like Georgie saying everything he wanted to hear. But it wasn't true. It wasn't real.

He continues to look at Max. At first, he didn't like anyone in the Party. If anything, he had thought of them like they were trying to replace the Losers to Eddie, but it's clear to see that isn't true. They're just people with lives, just like Bill.

He hadn't seen It take Georgie. Judging by the blood stains growing in multiple spots on Billy's body, she had. She's just a *person*. Nobody should have to see that.

"It's your fault, Max. It's your fucking fault."

"No, it's not. No, *I tried*-"

There's a burst of movement from Lucas- he turns to the rest of the group, pulls the gun out of Mike's hand, and then turns back to rush forward and bring the butt of it down on Billy's head. Max screams, her hands flying to her mouth to cover it. Lucas stumbles backwards, away from the monster that falls and starts twitching on the ground. He tosses the gun blindly to the floor, somewhere in the direction of where Mike was before Max practically shoves herself into Lucas, wrapping her arms around him. Having to hold both him and Max up, he grabs her back and takes a few steps backwards with Bill to join the rest of the group. Max's grip on him is solid.

"Max." He whispers, tapping her arm frantically as It's form starts to change to something resembling a clown. "Max, you have to get off. Max!"

Max detaches herself from him but slips her hand into his grip, using her other to wipe her face. "Oh my god!" She exclaims upon seeing the mess that was Billy down turn into a grotesque and convulsing beast.

Then it stops.

And all at once, like It's limbs are metal rods, It stands.

Will figured out how to use the bolt gun. Or, at least, he think he did. All he had to do was pull the trigger, right?

He hopes thats all there is to it as It- *Pennywise*, now- rises from the group like a vampire out of a coffin. The look on It's face isn't mean or happy or really anything other than *hungry*. Like it's *starving*.

Will had starved in the Upside Down. He had thought that he would for sure die of thirst, but his body kept running like he were in some form of Hell. Now he feels like he's there again, staring down this ravenous beast that looks at him and his friends like they're his last meal. Will rests his finger on the trigger, ready for anything.

Ready for the exact moment when It charges forward at the group, creating a stream of screams from the kids as they hit It with whatever they can. By now, those without weapons had managed to find *something* . However, It made a beeline to Bill, who stood readily with a metal shovel. As soon as It came close enough, he brought the shovel down on It's head. Theoretically, that would have killed any human- but It is far from human, and that's shown when It lets out a high-pitched laugh and grabs the handle of the shovel, attempting to tug it away from Bill. Beverly joins in on the struggle and helps Bill tug away the shovel.

"We should-!" Beverly says, not finishing her sentence.

Bill locks eyes with her and nods. "Yeah." He agrees, though Will doesn't know on what. They seemed to read each others minds even though he knows they can't do that. "N-now!" Bill calls out.

In sync, the two shove the shovel into It's chest, surprising It and sending It reeling backwards. For a moment, it seems like the plan worked- except It doesn't let go, and the force sends the shovel flying out of Beverly and Bill's grasp. Bill swears and sticks his hand out over Beverly as the monster drops the weapon and runs forward-

Will's feet move before his brain processes. He's suddenly in front of two people he never met before and has no obligation to except the fact that they're friends with his friend he met a few months ago,

risking his life. He hears someone from the Losers- their Mike, he thinks- call out his name in shock. Nevertheless, he extends his arm with the bolt and, as soon as It's close enough, squeezes the trigger. He feels the kickback but's prepared for it, watching the crack in Pennywise's face split like he were constructed out of china instead of the skin he appeared to be made out of.

It screeches and swings It's unnaturally long arm, knocking Will across the face.

"Hey!" He hears a voice that is most definitely his Mike shout out. Before he even has time for his vision to clear up after being hit so hard, Mike is flying across him and slamming into The Pile and collapsing onto the ground in a heap.

"Shit! Mike!" He hears Steve shout and rush over with Robin trailing him. Dustin, Lucas, Max, Eddie, and El are nowhere to be found and the Losers are now rushing at Pennywise with their respective weapons drawn. Except for Ben, who seems to be just going for it with his bare hands, which is kind of badass, but also not really because he might die.

Will decides to go with the Losers although the left side of his face is sore. Bill picked up his shovel, apparently, but an arm with a yellow sleeve extends from It's mouth and throws the weapon along with Bill to the side before he can reach It. Beverly is next with her poker, going to slash It, but It dodges her attack. She distributes her weight in anticipation of hitting something solid, and stumbles and falls.

Will surprises himself again when his fingers start fumbling to reload the bolt gun. He's never reloaded a bolt gun, but somehow, he knows how to do it- methodically, he loads the ammo while the shot of the gun from Hanlon hits Pennywise in the shoulder, momentarily injuring It. It falls to It's knees, but otherwise, the bullet does nothing. Something that looks like burning hands protrude from the wound, reaching out toward Mike. It makes his breath catch in his throat.

As quick as possible, Will positions his finger back on the trigger and places it against the side of Pennywise's head. The trigger is already squeezed before Pennywise can even turn to look at him.

His head adorns another crack. The monster freezes.

His head turns, slowly, towards Will, and Will locks eyes with him.

With Troy.

Troy gets up off his knees, a snarl on his face. "You fucking fairy!" Troy screams out, using two hands to shove Will backwards. "Have fun on your visit to *fairyland*, you *faggot*?" He teases, a grin spread out on his face. Just a tad too wide. "Even your friends think you're a fucking fag! They really thought you'd never find out what I said about you when you were dead, like you were *supposed* to be? It's because they think you're dumb! A dumb little *princess*!" He sneers, stepping closer to Will as he backs away. "You hear me? You're a f-!"

Troy's shouts are shut up when someone jumps on top of him, knocking him to the ground. This person Will quickly realizes is Richie, but the attack doesn't silence It. "-aggot!" It finishes with a warped and gravely voice, except this time, he looks different. This time, he's a blonde boy with a mullet. He continues to spur more hateful words as Richie pummels him with his fists, whatever item he was using as a weapon dropped and long forgotten in his fury. The boy he's hitting changes to someone who vaguely looks like who Will concluded to be Henry Bowers, except with curly hair and shorter. He says the same things, but nobody moves. Richie continues to hit It, and he looks like he's doing a pretty good job, until his fist suddenly comes away with a black liquid. He falters, hits one more time due to momentum, then stops. Underneath him, now, is Eddie, except with a black liquid spewing out of his mouth. "I bet you like being on top of me, Richie." Not-Eddie sneers. "Kiss me, faggot!" *Oh*, Will thinks. *Oh, he's like me*. For a moment, Will had expected that Richie would go back to hitting, but suddenly he's scrambling off of Pennywise with his clean hand clapped to his mouth like he's going to puke.

It seems as though Will was the only witness who is surprised by the fact that Richie's gay, since all the others are Losers and anyone in the Party or related to it besides for Will didn't see it. Cool. Whatever. Will's too busy reloading the bolt gun to care that he's out to the Losers before the Party.

Another bang sounds from Hanlon's gun, leaving everyone cringing

away from the noise and Will's ears ringing. He looks to Pennywise, a gaping hole in his face where his nose should be. Will grabs onto the nearest person to him, who happens to be Bill, as the monster face starts to grow a slimy, black mouth.

"No. No, no, no." Will mutters as It's body convulses, the entirety of It starting to become thinner, taller, and more grotesque. It's outfit is gone, now turning into a body with long arms and a threatening gait.

"What is that?" Ben asks, terror evident, as Pennywise's face morphs. It begins to stand up straight, staring at them with It's eyeless face.

"One of my monsters. The *Demogorgon*." Will has time to say.

Then It screeches, It's mouth opening up into a flower of pink gums and teeth.

Notes for the Chapter:

thanks for reading guys! the kudos and comments ive received have been unreal <3

25. 25

Notes for the Chapter:

i genuinely can't remember if this is today's second or third update, but whatever number it is, i hope you enjoy! six chapters left...

"Shit! Mike!" Steve shouts, dashing over to Mike, who just got slammed into The Pile, hard, and now lays unmoving on the ground. Steve drops to his knees beside him. "Please don't be dead. Please, *please* don't be dead." He murmurs.

Robin gets down next to him, too. "Mike? Mike?" She asks desperately. Her and Steve's one job was to keep the kids safe, and if Mike were hurt she wouldn't know what she would do. It would be her fault, wouldn't it? She and Steve are the adults in this situation, if only by a few years. They shouldn't have let anyone come down here, should have stopped them, should have turned around and left the second they saw that bird attack Stan.

"I'm... fine." Mike grunts, repositioning himself so he can start to sit up. Robin lets out a breath of relief, every muscle in her body relaxing despite the fighting going on behind her. "Crap." He winces and rests a hand on his head.

"Are you bleeding? Are you hurt? How many fingers am I holding up?" Steve asks all at once, holding up two digits.

"Two." Mike says, swatting Steve's hand down. "I'm fine. Just winded. And-" He looks over to the others, surprised to see 'Troy' shouting at Will- he can't exactly pick up on what Troy is saying- and even more surprised to see Richie come out of nowhere and knock It to the ground. Mike can't get a good look, but whoever Richie is currently assaulting with his fist is screaming out slurs in between the impacts.

Robin stands up and grabs Mike's arm to help him up, too. Mike takes a deep breath, still trying to get his lungs to feel normal. As of now, they feel like someone is squeezing them. "What do we do?" He asks, scanning the situation. Everyone watches, equally impressed, until

Pennywise switches It's form.

Robin doesn't need glasses to see that It's Eddie.

She doesn't know if Richie is out, but he probably is, since Eddie told her that he's the 'special boy' she had teased about. Either way, it doesn't take a genius to know that Pennywise turning into Eddie had struck a nerve with Richie. He clamors off of Pennywise, seemingly about to blow chunks.

"Richie!" Robin calls out. "I have to- to go." She says, and runs off towards the boy who was on the other side of the scuffle, lurched over with his hands on his knees. As Robin dashes, a loud gunshot rings out, causing her to cringe. She manages to get to Richie, placing her hand on his back and rubbing comfortingly as he gags. Nothing comes out, thankfully. Robin really didn't want to see that. "Hey, you're okay." She tells him as comfortingly as she can with the sounds of screaming around them.

Richie sucks in a gulp of air. "No, it's not. It's not okay. He- he- I-"

"I know. Eddie's told me. I am, too." She says. Richie's face is still extremely distressed, no doubt thinking about Eddie and where he is now. They know that he's *not* with Pennywise, and they also know that he's not the kind of person to run, which means that he and El are probably doing something stupid. But Robin doesn't need to say that out loud. She racks her brain for information- anything comforting to say that might make Richie be able to breath normally again. "He said that you two are a *thing*." Robin decides on saying, mentally slapping herself on the forehead. Yeah, we're fighting another monster, getting our asses handed to us, and we don't even know where Eddie is, but it sure matters that he vaguely told her on the car ride to Derry that he likes Richie.

Apparently, though, it does matter. Richie gives her a sort of smile. "He said that?" He asks, pushing up his glasses.

Robin doesn't have time to answer, because suddenly there's a high-pitched scream that feels like it's reaching the inside of her head ripping through the air. Both her and her new small child friend whip around to face It, staring them down.

Richie swears loudly- Robin knows that this is the Demogorgon due to all the descriptions she's gotten from everybody, as well as Will's drawings, but seeing it is something totally different.

She's too shocked from seeing a nightmare coming to life to move, and then It's running towards her. With hardly enough time, she manages to shove Richie away from her before It's face opens up again to screech. She feels the pressure on her chest from the monster hitting her, then the impact as she hits the ground- her vision momentarily goes white. Gasping and instinctively bringing her hand to her face before she can see what the Demogorgon is doing, Robin feels the splitting pain in her arm before she can even process that It's biting her.

She thinks she's going to die. She cries out for Steve, or maybe El, but she really thinks she's going to die anyway. Until It goes limp collapses on top of her. As fast as possible, she shoves It off her and scrambles away from It as It begins twitching again to change form; behind her, Will hooks underneath her armpit and yanks her to her feet- this is when she sees Steve, who was holding his bat. "Thank you. Thank you." She says to him breathlessly.

But it seems that their problems are from over.

Far from over, because It begins to grow.

Notes for the Chapter:

uhm ya'll better stop complimenting me before i get it in my head that i'm an okay writer LMAO

26. 26

Notes for the Chapter:

you know the fucking viiiibes

Eddie knows nothing and everything all at once. He can hold thoughts in his hands and squeeze them and feel them pop, like paint with only the outermost layer dried; he can watch the color ooze out and form pictures.

And yet, at the same time, he can't do anything other than scream and hold and not stop. What is he even doing? He forgot. It must be important. Orange surrounds is vision and smothers him like an overbearing mother giving him a hug and squeezing too tight. Eddie might pop like the half-dried paint.

Eddie knows nothing. He doesn't know where he is, or who he is. He just keeps going.

Eddie knows everything. He knows how this can end and he knows it isn't good. He knows the girl next to him is helping him. He knows how they might all die but he doesn't know who they are. He knows or he doesn't know and it's all too, too much.

He wants this to be over. He's so tired. He has to keep going, though, because he knows whatever he's doing isn't done yet. He'll know when he's done it. Done what? He's so tired.

"Eddie!" He hears, and vaguely realizes that's him. "Eddie, you can keep going. Don't give up." The voice continues. That's her. That's the girl who's helping him. Who is she? Eddie loves her. Who is she? "Eddie!" She shouts again.

A surge of energy pulses through him and he takes a breath, the pull of the Deadlights covering him seeming to barely edge away. The girls stops yelling- either he can't hear her, or he's done something right. He keeps going. He's not weak. He won't give up.

For a brief second, Eddie comes to, like something snapped him out

of his haze. He was closing the Gate. Why did he stop? He has to-

The sharp pain closing over his side and dragging him off the ledge he was standing on with El answers his question.

He screams- El does, too- but he's already being yanked away. The teeth are biting into the skin on the right side of his waist, sending searing pain shooting through him; he can see blood coming from the wound as he's pulled closer to can only be some sort of image of the Mind Flayer conjured from It. Another tendril is shooting towards him, shooting towards his face-

Blue.

Suddenly, there's a loud burst, a lot of blue, and a crackle.

A firework.

The pointy teeth slip out from his side, releasing him- Eddie drops for a second, but quickly stops midair and feels himself soaring back to the ledge. Once he's there, arms are wrapped around him. He hardly understands what just happened. He almost just died, like how Billy died. He was up in the air- everyone would have seen it as It killed him. Everyone.

"Dee!" El says. "Dee, I thought-"

"We have to close the Gate. El." He responds, his voice feeling strained. "I'm okay. I'm fine." He needs to kill It. He had said that last time, he had shook with rage, and then he kicked It across the face. This time, he'll make good on his promise.

"Eddie-" She repeats, looking at his wound with her mouth opened in shock.

"El. We have to close it. Richie is down there! Will is down there! And Bill and Stan and both of the Mikes and-"

"Okay. We close it, then."

Eddie nods. "We'll cl-close it."

She lets out a shuddering breath, her eyes looking at his side then back to his face.

"It's not- not that bad." He says quietly.

"Dee..."

He cuts her off by grabbing her hand. "Let's just do this, okay? We have to."

El clenches her jaw, squeezing his hand. Slowly, she turns to look upwards at the Deadlights peering out of the crack in the ceiling, and raises her hand to face it.

Eddie sees nothing and everything all at once. He sees himself dying. He sees another version where it's Richie, and it doesn't stop. He sees a world where a man who looks too dead and too old to be Stan lays in a pink-tinged bathtub, yet he knows it's exactly who he thinks it is. He sees himself, looking more Hopper's age than his own, with gauze on his cheek and a huge wound on his stomach. He sees Richie begging that they don't leave him. He sees another version where both he and Richie are okay. He sees El crying, El screaming, El laughing. And he sees it all at once, yet separated at the same time. He sees it in slow motion, yet faster than a blink of an eye. He sees it all and knows it all but doesn't know which one is the truth- he sees happiness and pain and sorrow, and he sees himself in all of it.

What is he doing? He forgot again. The only thing that was real was the pressure squeezing his hand, and he can't even feel that anymore. He feels the tightness all around his head. Heat bubbles and broils across his body like he's being cooked, and his throat feels like it might tear.

Squeezing, squeezing, squeezing- his head might pop-

He's done. He doesn't know how he knows it, but he does.

The orange that swallowed him gives way, and he can see again.

He is not on the ledge with El. He's floating somewhere. Somewhere midair.

He doesn't have time to figure out exactly where before he's dropping like a stone.

Notes for the Chapter:

splat!

27. 27

Richie watches Eddie's hand slip out of his sister's. He watches Eddie's feet leave the ledge, and he watches him float upwards and towards the "Gate" as it began to seal.

Richie watches Eddie burn.

He thought, at first, that It had set him on fire- that he was dying, and that Richie couldn't save him. Then Robin had grabbed him roughly by the arm, hard enough to bruise, and breathlessly told him that that was completely normal. For Eddie, anyway.

He hears Beverly scream behind him, and then maybe Will, but he doesn't turn. Richie watches the Gate close. He *has* to see it.

And then, he watches Eddie's flame flicker out. The boy looks around, confused for a second- then his eyes close, and Eddie drops.

Richie doesn't know how high the ceiling is from the ground, but he knows that it's high enough. He shouts, but his distress does nothing- his figure disappears behind the cluster of children's toys and items, and Richie waits with his breath held. The sound of Eddie's body hitting the floor on the other side of The Pile makes Richie's heart stop.

He knows that Eddie is dead. He knows that there was *no* way someone could survive a fall like that.

"Oh- oh my god-"

"Richie! Rich, we need you!" Mike Hanlon calls to him. Richie whips around over his shoulder, the crowd of the Losers gathered around Pennywise's form. As fast as possible, Richie scrambles over- his first thought is that It looks like a baby, all quivering and begging. His second thought is that he doesn't care. It looks small. It looks weak. It's connection to the Gate is little to none, so It must be close to dead.

Mike reaches down, and the clown's whimpering and pushing with

It's stupid hands are nothing preventing his fingers piercing through It's chest, wrapping around It's beating hard and pulling it out like plucking a rotten apple from a tree. Mike holds the thumping thing in the middle of the present Losers, presenting it. One by one, they place their hands on top of it. There's Bill, then Bev, then Ben, then Richie, and the last Loser, hesitant yet unyielding as always, is Stan.

They squeeze It's heart together, and Richie feels the thrum of life progress into nothing in his hands.

The heart begins to crumble and flake off, floating into the air. It had killed their neighbors, family, innocent children. And now they- a group of fifteen kids, dirty, panting, and breathless- killed It. Like any living thing, It cannot sustain an injury. It's not human, but It isn't God. It isn't immortal. Nothing is permanent.

No one is.

"Eddie." Richie murmurs, his hand slipping off the disintegrated heart. He turns and runs, faster than he's ever before. He needs to see Eddie, needs to see him, even if it's just to confirm what he already knows-

He sees Eleven, bent over his body and sobbing.

"Eddie!" He calls out, quickly falling across from Eleven onto his knees.

Seeing Eddie's body was different than thinking about it. Somewhere in his head, he registered that, when Eddie dropped, there was no logical way he could have survived that fall. But a sliver of hope had still remained that he would run around The Pile and see Eddie and Eleven chatting happily, waiting for them. Instead he found her crying over his body. His *body*. How can *Eddie* be dead? Eddie, a permanent figure in his life, now gone forever? When he had moved to Hawkins, it sucked, but Richie always had the relief of knowing that Eddie was *somewhere*. He had even felt like Eddie was in the same room as him, sometimes. Richie feels tears stab at his eyes like the fire that had covered Eddie's body.

"He's-" She hiccups. "He's breathing. He's alive. Just unconscious." She

says in between gasps. "I thought he died. I saw him fall."

Richie stopped listening to her the second she said 'breathing', placing his hand on Eddie's neck and feeling for a pulse, just to make sure. It's there.

"Bowers." Richie murmurs, the name bringing such relief to him that he never thought imaginable. "Bowers fell down the well and hit every rock on the way down, and he didn't even break a bone." He goes to grab Eddie's hand, his chest thrumming and fingers vibrating. Eddie is alive, he's okay, he's fine-

But Henry Bowers didn't have a giant, bleeding bite wound.

"Jesus fuck." Richie breaths out, his eyes falling upon the area of his shirt soaked with blood. He had been so focused on Eddie's face, and how there was pink in his cheeks instead of the cold blue of death, that he hadn't processed the growing injury. Bringing his fingers to the hem of Eddie's shirt, Richie tugs up. It's something he's thought about doing before, but not like this. The bite wounds from the Not-Mind Flayer are deep, almost going all the way through. Richie winces.

Then the entire sewer begins to shake.

Notes for the Chapter:

no splat! only blood <3

28. 28

Steve, Mike, and Bill all carried Eddie out, Richie trailing behind them so he can make sure he can see Eddie. The rest of them had all started running as the building around them caved in, sending rocks flying downwards and crashing into the ground. They all poured out of the house on Neibolt, out a breath with their chests heaving, the trio carrying Eddie most of all.

Without bothering to talk, they all place him down on the sidewalk as gently as possible, pulling up his shirt to look at the wound. While they do this- with Richie kneeled with them, clutching Eddie's hand with his own- Robin does a headcount of everyone, making sure that they're all there.

"Thirteen, fourteen... where's fifteen?" She calls out, he eyes wide. "Where's number fifteen?" She repeats, her voice becoming more frantic. Everybody is on edge and looking around for the supposedly missing person, checking who's next to them and around them.

"Did you count yourself, Robin?" Steve shouts, his eyes remaining focused on the problem in the ground that is a bleeding Eddie.

"Oh. Right. Yeah, yeah, fifteen." She runs her fingers through her hair and some of the tension spills out of her. She nods. "Yeah, we're all here." She says weakly. The kids start gathering in a huddled clump, pressed upon against each other as if it would save Eddie.

"Now, shut up!" He calls out, not taking his eyes off the injured kid.

"Shit. I was supposed to keep you all safe-" Steve stays, his voice distraught.

"He's okay." Richie says immediately. "He's okay. He'll be fine. He's not dead. He'll be-"

"We can't take him to a hospital." Ben says quietly. "How are we going to help him?" He's met with blank stares, and Beverly rests her head on his shoulder silently,

"Owens!" Lucas suggests with a snap.

For a moment, those who know who Sam Owens are consider the idea, but Wheeler shakes his head, frowning. "We're in Derry. He can't get here before-" He stops himself. Before Eddie bleeds out.

"We'll think of something. We always think of something, okay? Just everyone, shut up!" Steve puts Eddie's shirt back into its normal position, and then puts his head in his hands, muttering to himself. He's right- they've made it this far and everything has worked in their favor, for the most part.

But luck runs out.

The silence is immediate and deafening. Max is tucked under Lucas' arm, and Richie, Bill, and Steve are all crowded around Eddie. El is behind Richie, looking over him and clutching onto him hard enough to bruise. Stan is gripping Mike Hanlon's arm, while Mike Wheeler

and Will stand together. Beverly is next to Max, one arm loosely linked with her's while the other side of her body is occupied with Ben. Robin and Dustin are together, Robin's arm over his shoulder. The whole group is tense and shivering, waiting. Waiting for Eddie to get better. Or waiting for him to get worse.

Nobody wants to think about the latter, Eleven and Richie most of all.

Richie grips Eddie's hands in his- his head is starting pound and feel like TV static, which isn't a great feeling. He thinks he might pass out.

When everything goes blank, he thinks he did. The entire world is pitch black and dark, like he were in a lightless void; underneath him, there's a thin film of water. It reminds him of grey water.

"Did it work? Richie, can you hear me?" Richie hears from behind him- he spins around and is met with Eddie, who looks extremely happy that Richie responded to him. Richie has no fucking clue what is going on, and he can feel his legs shaking.

"What the fuck?" Richie asks, looking to Eddie then around wherever the hell they are. Whatever is going on must be due to his powers, because Richie was at Neibolt then here the next, talking to Eddie.

"You can!" Eddie jumps forward and wraps his arms around Richie's neck, enveloping him in a hug. Shocked, Richie stumbles back a bit before returning it, appreciating whatever weird shit is happening right now.

For a moment, Richie allows himself to relax. What is happening doesn't matter- he can feel Eddie in front of him, real and solid and smelling like hand sanitizer. "You're okay." Richie says once Eddie finally pulls off him, baffled. His eyes trail to his side, where a giant bite mark that's killing him is supposed to reside. But it's not there. "You're okay?"

Eddie shakes his head, a weak noise falling from his lips. "I love you."

Richie's eyes widen, then his face furrows into confusion. "You're not going to die." He says, because he's not. Why the fuck is he saying sappy shit? He can tell him later when he's better. He fine- he's not going to-

"Are you going to say it back?" Eddie asks hesitantly. Eddie knows he is probably going to die, and he's heard Richie say it about him before, so he figured, what the hell. Might as well try. Now he feels stupid. And sad. And he's still dying, so he's three for three.

"No. No, I'm not. You're gonna be fine. I'm not telling you that- that- while you're bleeding out."

Eddie does his best to smile. "Okay." He says quietly. "Just tell me later, then."

Notes for the Chapter:

things aren't looking to good

29. 29

Richie's back outside Neibolt, gripping Eddie's hand with El's fingers pressing into his upper arms. Instantly, dread pools in his gut. He should have said it. He should of told him. Why didn't he tell him? *Why didn't he answer the phone?*

"Guys." Hanlon says quietly. Then, louder, "Guys!"

"What?" Stan asks, his voice scratchy and eyes red.

Mike is staring intensely down at his hand- the one he had cut a line into nearly a year ago, leaving behind a scar and a promise. The same scar, which had brought no pain after it's initial healing, now produced an odd tingling sensation that is *almost* painful but not quite. "Check your hands."

Slowly, every Loser follows his command- Dustin does, too but then realizes Hanlon wasn't talking to him and promptly lowers his hand. The Losers stare, engrossed in the scene playing out on their skin: the scar fading, fading, then not there at all.

"Lift his shirt, Richie." says Beverly, looking expectantly.

Richie trembles as he does so, all eyes falling on the wound.

The wound, slowly closing itself. Both the fresh and dried blood remains on his skin, but the threatening tears of flesh once opened enough to look like Eddie should already be dead from them now begin to shrink, forming his stomach and side again to look as normal and untouched as the Loser's hands look now.

"Oh my-" El breaths out, her words reduced to sobs as she leans her forehead forward so it's resting on the back of Richie's shoulder, who is frozen and staring at the shrinking bite mark with an unreadable expression. He almost looks like he's... stopped working.

"Eddie?" Richie whispers to him, his hand that isn't grasped in Eddie's going up to his cheek. "*Eds*. Please."

—
"Hello." Eddie says to the turtle in the sky.

Hello, Eddie. The turtle says back, though he doesn't say it with words. More like feeling- Eddie can feel the words against his skin and etched into his brain, like ice and fire, like the loudest noise and nothing at all singing into his ear. It makes him shudder, and he knows that whatever he is talking to isn't anything from his world. Like It. I'm proud of you.

"Thank you." Eddie responds, albeit confused. But, when turtle god says he's proud, Eddie has to listen. "What are you?" He blinks at the animal in front of him, impossibly big and impossibly wise. The question is rather crass and blunt, but he asks it all the same.

Maturin. It's nice to meet you, face to face.

"Am I dead?" He asks, unable to understand what's going on. He might be hallucinating, or maybe his brain is producing one last gush of serotonin and dopamine before he dies and won't be able to feel happy anymore. The thought of that makes Eddie sad, so he wraps his arms around himself. He'll miss Eleven and Richie. All his friends. Hopper and Joyce, too. He was never close to Jonathan or Nancy, but he wishes he was.

You should be, but I don't care much for what It wants. Maturin replies. Now you'll be okay.

"It." Eddie repeats, the name making him feel like he's broiling. "Did it work? Did I kill It?"

Maturin looks at Eddie with his giant, knowing eyes. Well, that was what you were supposed to do, wasn't it?

Eddie stares up at Maturin, feeling small, insignificant, and confused. "I don't understand. Did you make me like this?"

Like what? Powerful? Maturin asks. Eddie finds the way his voice reverberates around his skull starting to feel almost soothing, like Maturin is taking care of him. He wants to hug the turtle, but Eddie's much too small to wrap his arms around it. He's content to just stare up in wonder.

"Yes. Powerful."

I suppose it was me. Though, it was mostly you. I just gave you a nudge in the right direction. *Maturin says in some sort of nonchalant way, if godly turtles could even be nonchalant about something like giving a person like Eddie Hopper-Kaspbrak superpowers.*

"Why me? Why Ellie?"

Maturin looks at him and a feeling washes over Eddie that the answer is obvious. Because you and the others were the only people strong enough to defeat It.

"Why? I don't- I don't understand."

You ask a lot of questions. *Maturin says, and Eddie experiences another sensation wash over him, like a sigh. He didn't know turtles could sigh. He didn't even know Maturin breathed. What does he breath, out there in space? There's no oxygen. Maybe he just sighed for dramatic effect.* You're strong, Edward, just because you are. There doesn't need to be a reason for it. You and your friends were the ones I chose to defeat It, and your sister and her friends are who I chose to defeat That. It's not very hard.

"Are you God?"

Maturin ponders the question a bit. Maybe to you. He says. I had a stomach ache and threw up the universe. A real mess, I think.

"I think so, too." Eddie feels a happiness wash over him, like the turtle is smiling at him. Or, at least, pleased with him.

You did very good. Go play with your friends, now.

Eddie likes that idea.

—

Slowly, and so quietly that it could have been Richie's imagination if he didn't have the others there to witness it: "Don't... call me Eds."

Notes for the Chapter:

are you guys ready for the ending?? bc its soft, you
guys deserve it :)

30. 30

Notes for the Chapter:

this is the last chapter before the epilogue!

"I think God is a turtle." Eddie says, staring up at the sky. There's commotion all around him, people talking to him, asking how he is, how he feels. Eddie doesn't respond. For right now, he doesn't mind that the concrete of the sidewalk is hurting his back, or that he's covered in blood. Richie's hand is warm in his, and he isn't going to die. That's a lot more than he had a minute ago.

"You believe in God?" Richie asks.

Eddie shrugs, his shoulders scraping against the ground beneath him. "Just the turtle."

"Okay." He laughs slightly.

Eddie begins to sit up, which instantly makes his mother, Steve, start to fuss. "I'm fine. It doesn't hurt. At all." Eddie assures him, glad to not be lying. He feels normal- better than usual, in fact. Maybe a little *restless*. "I'm just dirty. Oh my god. Oh my *god*. This is so gross- I am covered in blood and sewer water and dirt! Holy shit. Holy shit. I need to take a shower."

"You almost just died and you want to take a *shower*?" Will gapes at him.

"We've heard stories about your quarry."

"No. No way!" Steve shakes his head. "Eddie was hurt. We're going home. There is *no* way we are going to the quarry."

They're at the quarry.

"I can't believe I let you guys talk me into this." Steve groans, staring down at the water below. the Losers, Robin, El, and Max were

starting to take their clothes off, while the others were a lot more hesitant. The Losers have done this plenty of times before and the three girls didn't care much, El most of all.

"Shut your whining." Robin says, beginning to pull her shorts off. "Take off your clothes."

Steve turns to face her, hands on his hips. "I thought you were a lesbian?"

She flips him off. "Fuck you."

"Fuck *you!*"

"You wish!"

"I don't have a crush on you anymore!"

"It's okay that you're in love with me, Stevie-boy. It was pretty sexy of me to kick the Russian governments ass, wasn't it?"

"The Russian government?" Stan asks, raising an eyebrow. He was placing his folded shirt down atop his folder shorts that are laying on a rock.

Dustin nods. "Communists." He says wistfully.

"Their monster- it's pretty cool. Maybe not at the time, but the stories are so fucking cool." Eddie gushes. By now, the rest the Party and Steve had started to undress themselves. "We're all gonna get streptococcus from cleaning off in dirty quarry water."

"I didn't hear you complaining on the way here." El laughs, bumping her hip into his.

By the time the last person had jumped- Steve- they were all soaked to the skin and splashing each other with water, the two group intermingling into one. Beverly and Max had taken an instant liking to each other, and Stan and Will were getting along exceptionally well. They all trade stories of their lives and about the Demogorgon, and the Mind Flayer, which they explained was the giant monster that had bitten Eddie. Most of them had already come to the

conclusion that it was also what killed Billy, but Max had felt it was necessary to tell them, anyway. She had known these people for hours but it might as well have been her whole life- the dynamic was natural and fluid, and it felt great to be with even more people who understood her.

At one point, Eddie and Richie had separated from the group, going into slightly deeper water to talk. Underneath the guise of foggy water, Richie grabbed Eddie's hand. "Remember the phone call?"

Eddie face shows confusion that slowly turns into recognition. "The one where you didn't want to talk to me." He says plainly.

"I was so scared." Richie admits. "To talk to you. I was scared you would just want to call this off, or that I would say the wrong thing, and all you would have to do is hang up and then I'd literally never get to talk to you again. Or that I wouldn't be able to stop myself and I'd tell you that I love you over the phone instead of in person."

Eddie rolls his eyes. "You're the stupidest person I know."

"I'm wounded!"

"I was the one who was wounded, *for your information*, and you pussied out."

"I did not pussy out! I was waiting until I could tell you *in person*. And look, I was right. So, ha."

"So, ha'?" Eddie quotes, quirking up an eyebrow. "That's your argument?"

"It is." Richie nods once, sharply.

Eddie takes his hand out of Richie's grip and gives him a small smile before throwing himself on top of him, pushing them both under the misty water. Once under, Eddie slowly opens his eyes, doing his best not to think of all the bacteria get into them. He's met with the blurry figure of Richie floating somewhat underneath him, the two of them slowly sinking to the pebbled ground beneath them. He watches Richie's eyes flutter open, too, blinking a few times. His face is just inches from his, and nobody can see them- he leans forward to

connect their lips, softly kissing him underneath the water. He doesn't dare let his tongue out of his mouth- there is *no* way he is getting dirty pond water in him mouth- but he enjoys the kiss all the same, feeling Richie's fingers running up and down his bare back before they both have to go up for air.

They all lose track of time, only aware of how late it is when it starts to get dark and their fingers start to prune.

"Shitbucket." El curses. "We have to get home. Dad and Joyce are going to be on their way home before we can make it there."

"No, no. We're staying at the Inn for tonight." Steve argues.

Lucas raises both his eyebrows incredulously, sticking both his arms out at his older friend. "Are you stupid? Our parents are all going to be *pissed!* None of them know where we are."

Steve crosses his arms. "We, uh-"

"We handled it." Robin finishes.

Lucas freezes, his eyes turning into glaring daggers and his arms dropping. "No way. No. You did not."

"We had to!"

Robin shrugs her shoulders. "I'm sorry, small child friend. We needed someone back in Hawkins to tell Hopper and Joyce and Jonathan and Nancy where we are."

"Oh my god. I *cannot* believe you."

"I'm sorry. What's going on?" Ben asks, confused

Lucas slaps the water. "They told Erica! *Erica!*"

"Who's E-E-Erica?" Bill asks.

"My kid sister! She's *ten!*"

"She fought the Russian government!" Robin argues back. "The

communists, Lucas! *Fucking* communists. We can trust her with this information."

"We can stay at the Inn tonight and go back to Hawkins tomorrow. And this time we won't shoplift from a gas station."

"Spaghetti, you shoplifted? *Again?* My little criminal." Richie teases, jamming his finger into Eddie's side. Eddie swats at him.

"I took a page from Bev's book."

Beverly groans. "Ew. I hate the Keene's."

"Did you just call him... Spaghetti?" Eleven asks.

Richie nods. "He's Eddie Spaghetti. Spaghetti Man."

"We call him Shorts." Max laughs.

"Good. You're not allowed to call him any variation of spaghetti. Or Eds. He only likes when I do that, don't you, Eds?"

"Beep beep, Richie." Eddie rolls his eyes, but he would also singlehandedly murder anyone for calling him Eds the amount of time Richie has if they weren't Richie.

"W-w-well you guys don't n-need to stay at the I-I-Inn. W-we can have a s-sleepover. My parents will be h-h-happy to see you, E-Eddie." Bill offers.

"And the rest of us?" Wheeler asks.

"W-we have air mattresses, a pullout c-couch, a-a g-guh-guh-guest buh-b-b-bedroo-oo-oom, and s-some of us can take the floor. We should h-have enough room. You don't h-have to, if you don't want."

"Guest bedroom?" Eddie asks, eyebrows furrows. He doesn't remember there being a guest bedroom.

"M-Mom and Dad are getting better." Bill answers simply, and Eddie realizes he's talking about Georgie's room. He's not sure how comfortable he would be sleeping in there, even if it's probably a

totally redone room by now, but it wouldn't be as weird for the Party, who didn't know Georgie.

"Your mom will be okay with fourteen extra kids?"

Bill shrugs. "I g-guess she has to be."

Mrs. Denbrough is. First, all of those in Derry phone parents, who luckily allow their respective children to stay for the night. They grab snacks and crash after a movie- somewhere before it ended, Robin and Steve went to the guest bedroom because they had to drive in the morning while the younger kids stayed up and mingled, all pressed against each other's sides and laughing. Being together felt... correct. In a cosmic sense. Like they were unstoppable apart and invincible now, too, together. They play a slew of games, like Never Have I Ever, which Will wins ("You've never had your first kiss?") and Beverly loses ("Holy shit, and you didn't throw up?"), and at some point they decide it would be a good idea to have a pillow fight that was El and Eddie against everyone else, since they had the unfair advantage of powers. Both sides argued they won until Mike jumped on Eddie's back and had promptly been tossed over his shoulder and slammed into the ground ("Eds, when the fuck did you learn how to do *that*?").

They go to sleep at a little past midnight, all murmuring goodnights before tucking themselves under blankets and into sleeping bags. Will and Eddie stay up a little longer in hushed voice, keeping the conversation light in case there are others listening. When they look at the clock to see it's one, Will decides to go to sleep and Eddie decides to use the bathroom. When he comes back, the room is dead silent.

There's movement in a corner of the room as Richie sits up. "Come here." Richie mumbles quietly. He has two pillows stacked on top of each other, so he takes one and places it next to his before taking his blanket and pushing it out so it's flat instead of crumpled and they can both fit under it. Eddie smiles gratefully in the dark and steps over Ben and Lucas, who seemed to end up together because their romantic counterparts ditched them. A few feet from Richie, El and

Mike are also intertwined. Eddie wishes he could just *do* that with Richie. But he knows he can't. Nevertheless, he sits next to the boy and they both lay down.

"Is anyone awake?" Richie asks the room, and is met by silence. He lowers his voice, anyway, just in case. "I love you." He says softly.

"I'm glad to hear it." Eddie smiles. "I love you, too."

Eddie hears Richie rustle before feeling his hand grasp his own. They fall asleep with locked fingers and warm palms.

Notes for the Chapter:

i'll be posting the epilogue on 12/9/19 (december 9th) for readers who are reading as i update! (psst that's my birthday!!)

31. epilogue

Notes for the Chapter:

here it is!

November 7th, 1986

"Happy birthday!" Eddie wakes up to the shouts from Hopper and Joyce. He groans- he had hoped, at the very least, to be able to sleep in on his birthday, but it seems as if that's not the plan that Hopper had in mind. He brings himself to sit up, looking over to his right to see El in a similar position. They give each other both a smile before turning to Hopper, who is holding a plate with a mountain of Eggos with whipped cream, sprinkles, and three lit candles on top of it and is followed in by Joyce with a similar confection.

It didn't take long for Joyce to start singing, with Hopper joining in- neither Eddie or El expected him to, but it delights them both the same. The two adults had gotten engaged a few months after the whole Derry debacle, which had gotten Eddie and El into quite a bit of trouble. They never told Hopper that Eddie almost died. He doesn't *need* to know that. Hopper approaches Eddie's bed while Joyce goes up to El's. They wait until the song is over before blowing out the candles.

"Alright!" Hopper says with a smile slightly hidden under his overgrown facial hair that Joyce insists he should shave. "Get dressed, you two. We have another surprise at Joyce's house."

They leave what's left the sugary delights on their dresser before leaving. Like usual, Eddie grabs his clothes and gets changed in the bathroom while El gets dressed in the bedroom. Eddie gets dressed in record speed, then brushing his teeth and hair. He has no idea what Hopper could have possibly gotten him for his birthday- he doesn't really *want* much. He has more than he ever thought he would have- a sister and a mom and a dad and double the amount of friends he's had previously. Troy even stopped messing with them at school after "Eddie broke his ankle", which is extremely not true because Troy has no evidence and can't prove anything.

Eddie is excited for the whole car ride, though he has no idea what to expect that's waiting for him at the Byer's house until he's pulling up on the driveway. Crowded by the window is not just the faces of the Party (plus Steve and Robin, who are honorary members), but six others.

The Losers!

"Oh my god!" Eddie gasps, pushing at the car door even though the car is still both locked and moving. El has a similar reaction, unbuckling her seatbelt and practically laying on Eddie to get a good look out the car window. They both glance at each other, beaming. Once the car finally rolls to a stop, they get out as fast as they can. By then, the Losers and Party had already slipped away from the house window and made their ways outside, tackling Eddie and El into a group hug. They had all seen each other multiple times since It, and this is nobody's first time in Hawkins, but going even a month without the Losers was like torture for Eddie. They're his home, even when he had none.

Eventually, they all go inside, walking in a cluster, Richie with his arm wrapped around Eddie. Eddie had come out to Hawkins the first time Richie had visited alone. He told Eleven first, who didn't know but wasn't surprised. Telling Hopper and Joyce had been infinitely more scary, but that turned out to be fine, too. He came out to Will alone, and in turn, Will came out to him, asking him to keep it a secret- neither were surprised that the other was gay. They've had a mutual understanding. The rest Eddie came out to all at once, and absolutely nothing changed except for Hopper making him keep the door open when Richie was over. Which wasn't too often, so it wasn't a huge difference. And he stopped making "don't get girls pregnant" jokes to Eddie, too, which was much appreciated.

Eddie is happy. Undeniably, crazily, stupidly happy. And loved. And in love. Surrounded by people he loves and people who love him, who come out carrying a huge cake that has the words "HAPEE FIFTEETH BIRTHDAY EL AND EDS" scrawled over it in green icing that was undoubtedly decorated by Richie because of the sloppiness and purposeful misspelling. Stan hates it. They eat the cake even though it's the morning, all gathering around in the living room. Steve and Robin take some cake to go, explaining that Robin has a *thing* she

needs to get dolled up for, which results in a lot of teasing from everyone and Will shouting out for Robin to cut her nails, because he figured out what that meant and was very unimpressed.

After his second piece of cake that tastes much better than how it looks- Mike Hanlon and Ben must have helped- Eddie puts his plate on the floor in front of him.

"Okay. I have some news." He says, still chewing. Everyone turns to him and he swallows before speaking. "I am... *moving* again." He admits, immediately eliciting gasp of protest from the Party and even the Losers.

"Eds, what the fuck? Where?" Richie asks, concerned.

"No way!" Lucas shouts.

"El, did you know about this?" Wheeler asks.

Everyone else continue protesting, until they're stopped by Will's laughter. "Eddie, you're such an ass for saying it like that." Eddie shrugs and Will scoffs. "Our parents found a house close by. We're moving in together."

"Oh! What the fuck!" Richie hits Eddie's shoulder and everyone else has similar reactions. Dustin throws frosting at him, and it hits his shirt, commencing a small food fight that quickly dies out because Will doesn't want to have to clean up the mess later. Soon, Joyce comes in with napkins so everyone can wipe their faces, and Hopper follows, offering to get another slice of cake for anyone who wants it.

"I don't think I can eat any more food." Eddie groans, leaning back against the foot of the couch. He slides down, and Richie promptly puts his head in his lap.

"Me neithuh, Doctuh K!" He says in a stupid accent, placing the back of his hand on his forehead like a damsel in distress.

Eddie flicks Richie's nose. "Doctor *H*, Richie."

Richie smiles. "Doctuh *T*?" He asks, wiggling his eyebrows suggestively.

"Oh, shut up."

Eddie smiles and laughs, looking around at everyone. Beverly, El, and Max are giggling at a magazine; Bill, Hanlon, and Wheeler are sitting in a triangle while violently debating what they would do if they had superpowers- Hanlon insists that he'd probably just use it for food, which El overhears and tells them about Eddie's stove-like abilities. Stan, Will, Ben, and Dustin are all gathered around while Dustin tells them about a D&D campaign that Wheeler had planned out a few months ago that was their longest one yet. Hopper and Joyce are there, too, watching over everyone quietly for the moment.

Eddie wouldn't trade his friends or his family for the world.

He imagines that he'll be staying in Hawkins for a while.

Notes for the Chapter:

i'm not a person for long sappy notes, but thank you all SO much for reading/commenting. it truly means everything to me. i don't know when the sequel will be posted, but it should be sometime within the month. have a great day!